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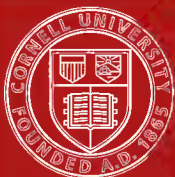
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LIBER AMORIS

LIBER AMORIS

BEING THE

BOOK OF LOVE OF BROTHER AURELIUS

BY

HENRY BERNARD CARPENTER

l mi son un che quando
Amore spira noto, ed a quel modo
Che detta dentro vo significando.



BOSTON

TICKNOR AND COMPANY

211 Tremont Street

310502 B
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SECOND EDITION.

UNIVERSITY
Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE.

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To my Father,

HESTER McNEIL BOYD.

*"Behold the Book of Love," said then the seer :
"Take it and hold it warm within thy robe
Near thy heart's pulses. On its leaves each day
Great Love's invisible finger creeping soft
And slow, as with a sunbeam shall inscribe
All things whatever in his name thou doest.*

*For whatsoever through Love's eye we see,
Or through Love's ear we hear, or in Love's heart
Conceive or purpose, whether in thought or act, —
Endures and is imperishable and true,
Growing within us toward that greater self,
Which lives and is eternal as the heavens.
All else is but the shadow of a shade,
A smoke when the fire dies, a thing of nought,
Baseless and blind as a poor idiot's dream.
Know, therefore, that whatever in pure Love
Thou doest is straightway writ within this book.
Look to't. For when Love comes, He opens this,
And from this reads to every soul its doom."*

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WIND-SONG.

LIBER AMORIS.



WIND-SONG.

FROM wintry realms where the wizard Sleep
Folds his dream-flocks by the dawnless deep ;
 From the frost-flowered meadows
 Whence trooping like shadows
At their father's call they southward creep ;
 From the caves of the North
 Mid the Night's dominions,
I come tempesting forth
 On mine ice-ribbed pinions,
And the snows are my robe, and the frost is my crown,
 and the clouds are my minions.

With my clarion winds the sea is whirled,
And churned like milk, or in mist-wreaths curled ;
 Where thought never wandered
I spread my storm-standard,

Unquivering my blasts on the groaning world.
And when I low-breathe
My wind-voices choral,
I draw from their sheath
In hues bright and floral
My star-blinding beams and my thunderless flashes of
falchions auroral.

The hoar-lipped sea to my sword's white scar
Writhes upward and gnaws his prison bar,
Till spent with his plunging
He sleeps in his dungeon,
Laid low with my winds and weary of war.
Then I ply my swift scourge,
And his face pale and ashen
From verge to dim verge
Wears a God's form and fashion;
As peace that mounts into pain, and pain into Love's
purer passion.

Men trace to their cradles and beds of birth
My three brother winds that walk the earth.
The West from quick Ocean
Draws mind and motion ;

The East whets his tongue with sharp Alpine mirth ;
The South leaves his home
In spiced undulation,
And the ships shear the foam
Round his kingdom and nation ;
But none ever dare to lay bare the cold lair of my dark
generation.

For my cradle is laid on the frost's white throne ;
'T is a sea of glass, where the God unknown,
Unveiling his terror,
Breathes close to the mirror,
And straight I come forth, but never alone ;
But with shapes of strange fear,
And shadows pursuing,
With hopes of sad cheer
That wail their undoing, —
Dark-mantled in death, girt with moans of remorse, and
wide-winged with black ruin.

And I bring Earth-Mother unnumbered ills
In my steel-blue chain that cuts and kills,
When my cruel weather
Draws tight in its tether

Her veins that flow thro' the hearts of the hills ;
And I quell the last songs
Which the wood-minstrels taught her,
And the gifts which by throngs
Gold autumn-kings brought her,
Till she waits, as one chidden, my bidding, and sinks as
a lamb at the slaughter.

And her body's grace lies dead and bare
With rending of raiment and ruin of hair,
And her autumn's rich fancies
Are steeped in death-trances,
Nor beauty, nor motion, nor voice is there.
Down streamlet and wood
Fails her faint pulse's quiver,
And back sinks her blood,
Without dream of endeavor,
Through her fingers and frost-fettered feet and her
sealed lids that slumber for ever.

At her seeming life my sword thrusts keen,
Till the Form turns pale and gaunt and lean ;
But wherever I enter,
I drive to its centre

And strengthen and kindle the Soul unseen.

When I crush the bright grape,

Of the wine I am keeper ;

When I hide the loved shape,

'T is that Love may lie deeper ;

What my death-sickle reaps, it bears hence to be garner-
ed as gold for the weeper.

When I ruin beneath, I open above

Clear fields where man in his thought may rove.

There my north-stars burning

Pay back with their yearning

His centuries' gaze of longing and love.

There I scale my sky-towers,

And rend with my pæan

November's cloud-powers

Lead-sceptred, lethæan,

And I shed the star-shine from its shrine down the
stairs of my pure empyrean.

By the drooping hearth fire winter-proof

Men sit and hear on the shuddering roof

My foot-fall's thunder,

And then they wonder,

Weaving stray thoughts through the flame's red woof,
What my wind-spirit saith
Through nights in December,
When the brand with loose breath
I unrobe and dismember,
Or when, as a tree sheds its leaves, I toss the last
showers of each ember.

Then I bring a voice for those lofty moods
Which come as the speech of solitudes,
When memories assemble
Or dim hopes tremble,
And a speechless pain on the spirit broods.
As a song-robe wrought
By a hand in lute-playing,
Which clothes a sweet thought
Beyond our speech straying ;
So I draw forth the secrets of sorrow and clothe them
in many a dark saying.

Yea, I am the voice of those iron Gods
Whom Darkness rears in the North's abodes,
Whose strength is in sorrow,
Who build for to-morrow,

And lay for the Fates their predestined roads.
Through my tones hoarse and stern
Beats a heart that is tender,
And my death-phantoms burn
Into angels of splendor,
Black-robed by old Night, but bright with the might of
the stars that attend her.

I, the Lord of the hosts of all clouds set free,
I, the symbol and voice of eternity, —
Ere my voyage is ended
And I have descended,
Through surging salt mists, on the midland sea, —
From this high convent-tower,
My midnight mansion,
Will touch Night's black flower
Into starry expansion,
As a winter-dark chestnut, spring-smitten, ascends into
star-flowers branching.

Now southward my frozen terrors burn
Through these rust-brown valleys of bleak Auvergne,
And I pause, as I chant them
My many-toned anthem

In keys oft varied ; for now I yearn,
Like a mother's voice lost
In a child-soothing ditty,
Now I shout like a host
That slays without pity,
Till the warder aghast peers down from the crown of
this storm-shaken city :

Where an old man's fancy weaves and unweaves
A pale thin bower of memory's leaves,
As I hull with low dirges
His heart's faint surges,
Till they heave as light as a child's heart heaves,
And through seas of calm Sleep
Which mists now encumber,
His dreams, as they creep,
Furl their sails bright and sombre,
Whilst I with my finger of silence unbind the light
seal of his slumber.

FIRST WATCH.

I.

SLEEP, Sleep, sweet Sleep, father of Life and Death,
Thy twin-born children ; source and end of all ;
Heaven's porter, who with bright smooth key of gold
Warm from the breast of God's dumb daughter Peace,
Openest through darkness for world-wearied man
A door to fields of light and stárry streams,
Where he may greet his dead whom he deems lost,
And in one minute taste eternity ; —
Sweet Sleep, dear easeful nurse of toil and woe,
Who gatherest all thy children, one by one,
Whether in earth or sky or soundless sea
In thy deep folds of painless lullabies,
And layest them soft upon the knees of God,

Yet comest never near God's hands or eyes,
For God, He only, slumbers not, nor sleeps ;
Dear Sleep, upon whose heart, the home of dreams,
Life wakes and wonders, weeps and sinks to rest ; —
Pass from me now and leave me as thou wilt,
Short are thy visits to an old man's eyes
Even such as mine, that wake and watch the dark
Long ere these ears can bless the bird of dawn.
Ay, leave me as thou wilt, but leave not those
My brethren, breathers of the pale pure peace
And cloistered stillness of these abbey walls ;
Where every cell that holds the slumberer now
Is as a bridal bower of quiet bliss,
And the hushed vow that sank in sudden sleep,
Soaring again, finds on the topmost stair
Of supplication trances turned to truth,
And wins in dreams the wished shrine of Love.

And, since pure wishes are as strong as prayers
And often more avail, bringing a boon,

So leave not, Sleep, those clustered homes below,
That seem to rise like a slow-climbing prayer
Toward one high thought, — this peaceful citadel,
Their central spirit and overshadowing shield.
Scatter thy dews of health on each cold hearth
And the tired hand that soon must wake its fires,
On the sad heart self-exiled, on the soul
That lives alone; still with thy starlit smile
Spread thy soft fingers, dipt in spells of night,
O'er smokeless housetops, mute unanswering doors,
And shadowy streets, that lie within the unbound
And breathless girdle of their walls and towers.

Peace be on all, but most of all on thee,
My brother Basil, seated by me here,
Feeding the watchfires of this winter hearth,
And the low lamp of my fast-fading thoughts
With all thy nameless numberless arts of love,
In listening look and speech-inviting smile
And glance more eloquent than most men's words.

Peace, Peace! So soft a word must surely win
Its prayer, and fill with peace the breather's lips.
Such prayer now rises visiting the seat
Of Him, the Father-Priest of all his worlds,
From me, Aurelius, abbot of this house, —
While now the storm-spent north-wind bows his head
Before a hushing hand, and slow there comes
A trance of silence on the midnight sky,
Strewn with unruddered wrecks of cloud that ride
In anguish o'er the unnavigable air.
For never have I known, since I was monk,
A watch so dark and terrible as this.
With what wild clamor the career of night
Wheeled in mid course round the black turning-point
And shouted onward for the morning's goal.
What wrath was in the tempest. How yon hills
Quailed at his coming, when his trumpet-blast
Of resurrection shrouded their brown ribs
With shreds of snowy flesh. How he roared by
With Titan step and breath of boreal song

To the Balearic isles, where the south sea
Fled from the mower, as with swift scythe-sweep
He sheared its blown and bowing meadow of waves.

Sayest that I slumbered ? When my senses drooped,
Then was I most awake. The soul within
Enfolded with the curtains of light sleep
Still kept her power of audience, and I heard
Voices like those that wait upon our life
Nearing its mortal passage. Oh that I
Could tell thee all the sounds that came and went,
When the rough north-wind opened every stop
And the stored thunder stormed his thousand pipes !
What memories of his own dark northern land
Then came ; what lamentations and farewells,
Tones of despair, entreaties, cries of Love
In fruitless vigil by the sepulchre ;
What thoughts that ask unanswerable things
And still stand begging at Life's door, what dooms
Dark as the last unreadable decree

Straight from the court of Death, what coming feet
Down Grief's long-closed forgotten corridors.
And here and there sweet cadences of sound
Sighed, Come away; then died and rose again
In whispers, Come away; and yet once more
The words returned, as in a litany,
With slow reiteration, Come away.

Sit near me, Basil, lay thy hand in mine,
That hand, the faithful herald of thy heart,
That heart, which to my spirit's every touch
Has rung true answers through these twoscore years.
For thou wert once an instrument wherefrom
I drew sweet pastime in thine earlier days,
When first I taught thee, and with fostering thought
Wooded step by step thy half-born thoughts to light.
But now the plaything is become a prop
On which to stay my death-descending steps.
As we have seen some shepherd of our hills
Go forth with carols to the rising sun,

Tossing his pastoral rod with untired hand ;
But when the vesper-bell slow rings him home,
That day-worn shepherd leans upon the staff,
And stooping sunward from his lofty rock
Surveys his one world's dear familiar face,
Old sunset hills and valleys dipped in shade.
Even such a staff, Basil, art thou to me,
Now lingering on the borders of the night
That calls me homeward. Leaning on thee thus,
Would I look back, and, summoning one by one
My wandering thoughts, would fold them in green
rest,

A slow-returning, silver-fleecèd flock
Of pasturing fancies fresh with sorrow's dew, —
Thus gazing down long valleys lost in mist
Would I raise up, albeit with wildered sense,
One thought which once was king of many more,
A vision lost beneath a visioned earth,
A dream within a dream, a trance of tears.

See, Basil, see within this fire before us
The gate of beauty to my land of dreams,
Opening its heart of hospitable warmth
To greet us. Once it might have seemed to me
The still sad glow of autumn's yellow woods,
The ruins of a sunset, the rich grave
Where daylight smiles most beautiful in death.
To suchlike shapings from the forge of thought
My firstborn poet-fancies might have come
In the more vacant moods when I was young ..
And sought the luxury of half-tasted grief.
These things have been. But Sorrow since has come
Near me. Her gorgeous shadow in which I dreamed
Has grown into a substance in myself,
Her apparitions wear an actual shape,
And I am now the thing which then I saw.
The fire is now a fire, and through its path
I see three figures walking, like the three
Whom crowned Chaldæa with his baffled eyes
Saw walking scatheless through the sevenfold flame;

The first in black, the second in sad grey,
The third in spotless white. The first one goes
Softly, with folded listless hands, dropped low,
And eyes bent earthward, as a man that mourns.
The second with his clasped hands at the waist
Looks forward eagerly ; the third with hands
Crossed on his breast converses with the stars.
So move they ; till, behold, one comes to these
Who seems the Son of God, and is a God,
Clad in wrought gold ; who coming brings a book
Saying to them, Write, and straight each in his turn
Writes, and gives back the volume to that God,
Who goes his way. Then those in white and grey
Depart through fiery walks of lacing light
And disappear, while one remains alone.
Draw near, thou form in black, that hankest thy head
And goest softly and lookest what thou art ; —
The scholar and the weaver of warm rhymes,
The lutanist and the lover, — draw thou near,
Ay nearer yet, that I may re-peruse . . .

That face long-buried from my sight, and tell
Thy tale to him who listens at my side.
'T is gone. A sigh of air flutters across
The bedded sparks and sleep of glowing brands,
And the face vanishes ; but the name shall live
Of him, who dying left me Love's bright book,
Who died that I might come within these walls,
Without whose death I had not lived till now, —
Dorian, Provençal Dorian, the son
Of old Sir Dorian, heir of Château d'Or.

There is a corner of the green glad earth
On which the times have laid down more than once
Their weight of blessing. Thither came great Tyre
Folding her feet in purple. There the Greek
Brought his bright gods, and planted the fire-seed
Of his republics, while his daughter spake
Of Chios and her lost Ionian home
In such sweet-vowelled words, ye sure had said,
The Muses were come down from Helicon

And danced upon her tongue. The Roman there,
Speaking his name in marble and wrought stone,
Unveiled the graven code on his clear shield
And with his spear wrote "Victory" in the dust
Where fell the glorious Gael, and called that land, —
Provincia. There came Love, a mightier lord,
Following his servant Law, and at Love's word
The broad Arabian stars loosed their first songs,
When rising from Granada, they looked warm
Above the cold Sierras and came near,
Burning the Gothic dark with amorous light.
And there came Venus, a poor exiled queen,
In sackcloth and with ashes on her head,
Ashamed and sad, out of her orient isles,
Seeking on sunset shores a sweeter fruit
Than that gold apple's, won and lost too soon.
'T was there she called new children round her state.
Where the grey olive dropped upon her head
The crown and unction of a deathless reign.

In a green covert of this pleasant land
Was Dorian born and bred. Full fifty years
Have flowed away to the returnless deep,
Since I saw Dorian's shadow cross the sward
That sloped through flowering terraces from the walls
Of Château d'Or. A happy haunt it was
Of holy sounds and healing shadows, made
For love and labor and deep pastoral peace.
In the bright languor of its air none knew
Which were the sweeter task, — to wake or sleep.
There morning came like noon, and when noon came,
It seemed that morn were walking in her sleep
Asking for afternoon through every nook
Of noon's deserted world. A screen of pines
With kindly gloom, like Life's presageful thoughts,
Softened the north's drear message as it came,
And broke it to the meadows, where they slept
Lost in long slumbrons waves of green and grey,
Shadowed and sunned, serenely spreading, rimmed
With little distant hills, which always looked

As if they said, Behind us there are others
Greater than we. Here Doriau first drew breath,
Such breath as makes the man. For many are born,
Never to live, forgetting that man's life
Begins not at his birth, but from that hour
When Love's most holy spirit stamps the soul,
And makes it current coin through all his realms.
Then, as his childhood woke and looked abroad,
A sense of wonder and worship and strange awe
Came o'er him, and a love unspeakable.
In him Love's kingdom had begun, and earth
Was full of godlike Presences and Powers
And sentinel Shapes that watched in all deep shades
And spake in twilights. Much he loved sad things,
But never was he sad before men's eyes.
What if he sought out blithe and playful ways
And gay resorts, yet sadness wore for him
A beauty and a greatness else unknown.
"For all sad things are great and beautiful,
And great things still are sad," he used to say ;

“Deep places gather darkness, and high hills
Wear heavy-laden crowns of sorrowing cloud.
Therefore Lord Love hath Suffering for his squire,
And Sorrow and Love go alway hand in hand.
This day Love leads out Sorrow, and on the next
Sorrow leads Love, and schools men out of hate.”
Not least in prowess and martial exercise, —
Yet these he honored not, save as their use
Should yield his body a vassal to his will,
And make each sense an altar, by whose light
Nature and he might meet and mate each other.
“For Love,” said he, “is genius that can draw
Whatever is best within us to wed fast
Whatever is best and loveliest under heaven.”

Sweet as the dawn of spring-time was the boy
To brave Sir Dorian, lord of Château d'Or.
Yea, since that hour when first the rosy bud
Was laid on his faint hands, and smiled, still warm
From its dead mother's kiss, how dear to him!

Dear as a jewel of price, the one thing saved
By a wrecked merchant from his treasure-ship
That founders in mid-sea. Oh, nevermore
Rode forth Sir Dorian by fair lady's side,
For gentle pastime or for tournament,
Since the dark moment when he knelt and wailed
O'er the dead face, and cried: "O Love, my Lord
Whom I have served so well, since here thou hast torn
Thy dedicated image from its base,
I raise to thee none else, and thus I lock
Thy temple-doors for ever." So he lived.
And when he saw his son going forth full oft
To dance and song and pastoral festival,
And the morn's musing and the noonday dream,
Then would he stay him in the pictured hall,
And point to the long sword and battered shield
And sun-stained banner which his grandsire bore
At Ascalon and Damascus, and would say:
"Take thy great-grandsire's arms, and go for me
Forth to the tilting-field and tournament,

And quit thee bravely in thy father's name.

And then would Dorian answer, smiling sad :

“Forbear, sweet father ; with thy leave to-day

This pipe shall be my sword, this lute my shield,

And love my banner above me.” ‘Neath these arms

And ‘gainst the wainscot wall, stood two great chests

Of timbered oak, brass-bound, that overflowed

With gold and silver vessels, and on these,

Caskets of moonstone and green malachite,

Stored with all precious stones, haled by the hand

Of that great-grandsire from the Syrian tents.

To which his father pointing, pleaded still :

“If not his arms, then take his spoils, my son,

And reign in Venice ‘mid her merchant-kings.

Sunlight is more than moonlight, speech than song,

Labor than love. What profit is in love ?”

To whom young Dorian, bowing reverently,

Gave gentle answer : “Hear me, most sweet father.

What need of riches, when the world is ours,

When day and night, the regal sun and moon

Shower gold and silver from their treasures,
When every evening opens o'er this earth
Her sky's blue casket-lid thick-lined with gems?"

So passed his boyhood, and that season came
When artist Nature pauses in her task,
Uncertain whether she will keep the Boy
A little longer, or with livelier touch
Make no delay, but fashion forth the Man.
And when his father saw him often pace
The jasmine-braided gallery round the court
In mood more serious and on speechless thoughts
Intent, or murmuring to himself the words
That bring, like cataracts or the stormy sea,
Echoes of old forgotten oracles
Heard once, when the great Gods were here on earth;—
Then would he say: "Now shall fair knowledge fill
This void thin-peopled by distempering dreams.
Dorian shall hence to Padua, and come back
A steady studious heir to these my walls,

Which long shall hold our name through years to come,
Unravished by the Church-wolf's greedy maw
That gulps down all. No fear that he shall be
A cleric, for he likes not over-well
Crosier and shaven crown and holy Church."
So vowed this gentle knight, so in his prayers
Turned he toward Padua, mother and nurse of arts,
From day to day, from month to lingering month,
Till Dorian's travelling steps had passed behind
Cold eastern Alp and the great Apennine,
Whose olive-wingèd feet send streams of oil
To feed the lamps that unextinguished burn
Over Saint Antony's blameless bed of dust.

Who knows not Padua, Petrarch's Padua,
Saint Antony's shrine, and Livy's sepulchre,
And the last anchorage for Antenor's fleet,
When Helen's beauty burned the towers of Troy?
Who knows not how the heavenward angels once
Waited for Giotto, while his pencil caught

And laid their passing shadows on the wall?
Who knows not how the Suabian bugle blew
Its third great blast through all the German land,
Till Rhine and Tiber and far Jordan heard
And flowed in homage at their Frederick's feet?
Then Brenta's river heard, and Padua drew
The breath imperial through her failing pulse,
And Learning rose in Frederick's name, and paced
The cloistral shadows dear to Learning's eyes,
And liquid stairs, o'erwhispered by her feet,
And rained her pearls upon the sunny heads
That flowed like yellow leaves borne by strong winds
Out of the northern land. Even such a wind
Brought Dorian his first friendship and his doom.

Of all that flew from the four-quartered heavens
To Padua's halls, none came of note and plume
Stronger and swifter and with stormier flight,
Than the young broods that clamored from the North
With voices like their cradle-winds, and words

Rough as the hoarse gurge of their groaning seas.
Soon every glooming length of colonnade
And pillared aisle and painted roof had learned
The tongue that rings within the Italian ear
Like a tempestuous music stern and sweet,
An iron clapper in a golden bell.
Hither, among the rest, came a strong youth
Whose name was Rupert, a poor armourer's son,
Bred near a castled rock in Allemaine,
Sick of the days of dull apprenticeship
Which made him master of his father's craft,
But left him slave of unfulfilled desires
And hopes that died, and rose, and died again.
For often as he fashioned with his father,
Conrad de Lindenwald, hauberk or helm
Or cuisse or vantbrace, had he said within :
“ Perish your weapons with you, ye that fight ;
The sword sows but the sword, force reaps but force.
But whoso sways the consciences of men
Is more than man and likest unto God.

Not force, but power, shall sway the human will,
For power is lordship and true sovereignty.
Such armour would I forge as should re-clothe
And curb the intractable world with inward law.
God's priesthood is such power ; — that will I seek.”
Eager, adventurous, formed for highest ends
And bent on high achievement, Rupert came ;
Keen as a goshawk, patient as a steer,
And poor as a poor church-fed mouse, he came
To toil at Padua's university ;
Where Dorian, then a scholar of two years,
Beheld him, loved him, and was straight his friend.

And now the college seasons gliding by,
Thrice had their yearly feast of love been spread,
Thrice had they dressed in summer leaves and flowers
The shapeless image of time's terminal stone.
And often had the aspiring arduous heart
Of Rupert failed, and he with famished srip
And starving hope had bent his laggard steps

Back to his Northland valley dark with firs,
Had not quick Dorian held his friend's poor hand
To make it rich by the full gift within,
And richer still without by kiss and tear
And supplication, whilst he strove and sued :
“ Stay, stay, my Rupert ; wherefore wouldst thou go
Thus early from me in our budding spring,
Ere the fresh-flowering incense on Love's bough
Can break into bright song of summer birds,
And thence to fruitage sweet to thee and me ?
Where are the vows, the promises, that made
Thee mine, and all that I inherit thine ?
Thine, therefore, even as mine, is this poor key
That opens for us twain the golden gate
To Padua's faery gardens, where all trees
Of knowledge ripen with each changing moon.
Why thrust aside with no unworthy hand
Gifts that still come as gifts to all that breathe ?
Has Life yet sounded her retreat ? Do swords
And dragons' teeth flame round the Hesperian fruit,

Or drive thee from its banquet? Do not Gods
Still sing thee to their feast, saying, 'Come up hither'?
When the tides thunder 'Forward!' why turn back?
On that sad morning when thou leftest home,
Thou didst kneel soft beside thy mother's grave,
And madest her name thy last beatitude.
Thy father's lifted hands and the wet lips
Of thy sweet sister blest thy parting steps,
And men from tilth and garden dropped their
tasks

To walk long leagues and bring thee on thy way.
Wilt thou go back to witnesses like these,
The living and the dead, — with empty hands
And pledges unredeemed, a graduate
In nothing but in broken promises,
In vows abandoned and in prayers that mock
The listening hosts of heaven? Didst thou not give
Thyself to God, and ask but one bright chance?
And see, the long-sought happy chance is here,
And thou wilt turn thy back on such a field,

On God, on friendship, on thy nobler self,
To leave the ploughshare, like a stranded keel,
Dead in the fruitless furrows of thy life !”

Musing awhile, then Rupert gloomily said :
“ I owe not anything, nor would I hold
Save what my own right hand shall win for me.”

As an eaves-building martin darts away
From her unfinished nest, that she may bring
Some few slight straws or twist of tufted wool,
To line a love-bed that shall keep her brood ;
So back flew Dorian to renew his plea,
Re-lining it with warm and chance-thrown waif
Of reasoning that might stay his wavering friend :
“ In this one thing, my Rupert, art thou lacking.
Purely to give and purely to receive,
Ask for the selfsame spirit. Wherefore love
Is no less needed in the hands that take
Than in the hands that minister the gift.

But thou,—thou prizest more what thou mayest
win

With thy unweaponed power than what the hearts
Of Gods might bleed to thee. A crown may bribe,
A kiss will never buy thee. There, it grows,
The love of power, but not the love of love,
Through those dark-tangled shadows of thy thoughts,
Where the sharp fingers of pinched poverty
Set deep the rooted bane of paltry cares,
From which I now would free thee, knowing well
That thou art formed by many a master-stroke
Grandly for good or evil. Nay, sweet Rupert,
But take, I pray thee, that which is thine own ;
Not I, but some kind deity makes it thine.
And know thou this, that he who will not stoop
To take the fruit ripe-fallen at his feet
To-day, will on the morrow breathless leap
And tear the unwilling apple from the bough,
Unkind to himself and that which hangs above.
And yet how knowest thou, brother, if mine eyes

May not win back for me in years unborn
Far more than this poor little that I give ?
What large repayment and rich recompense
Shall then be Dorian's, when his life-worn feet
Tread the last wintering slope of leafless days,
And he perchance athirst for southern draughts
Of charmed ambrosial air shall light upon
Some incense-breathing isle or summer bay
Or soft Sicilian shore, and find thee there,
Between deep-violet hills and opal floors
Of evening water, on a marble seat
Cooled with the tender dusk of sycamores,
In the red shadow of thy cardinal's hat ;
And coming he will lay his hand in thine
And look with tears in thy slow-questioning eyes,
Saying, ' Knowest thou thy friend ? ' Then thou wilt
 look,
And all at once dim memories will flow back
Moistening thine eyelids with a yearning love,
Till thou shalt turn away, lest those around

Should mark thy changing cheek. There will I sit
Near thee, and, mute with joy, will gaze at thee,
While on thy lip some ripe great word shall wait
To fall amid the pause of lighter talk,
Like heavier fruit that drops through gossiping leaves
Of orchard trees in autumn afternoons.
And when we are left alone, thou wilt come near,
Forgetting all thy pomp, and wilt embrace me,
And weeping ask me, 'Dorian, sweet my friend,
Tell me thy heart's least wish, and I am thine
To do it for thee to my uttermost.'
Then will I answer, and utter all my heart,
And kneel and lay my face between thy hands,
And tell thee all my sorrow and all my care,
The sobbed confessions of the o'erburthened soul.
And I will hear in thine absolving word
A deeper voice, and find beneath thy robe
A man's heart and a man's hand, and in these
That mightier hand and heart, that wipes the tears
And rolls away the burthens of the world."

Such plea was Dorian's in his last appeal
To Rupert, and with such plea he prevailed.
And though in thought he shaped no baseless dream,
Yet little knew he what their ends should be.
Ah me! and little know we, any of us,
Of that which shall be, when on heights of morn
We shape and sing toward heaven our crown of towers.
And while we yet are singing, comes a gloom
And a red hand strikes through our roof of stars
And hurls us down 'mid showers of rafter-sparks
To utter darkness, bidding us there begin
And thence build slowly, strongly, even as He
Who ever layeth his lowest palace-beams
Deep in dark waters. So it was with these,
Yoke-fellows twain, whom time came now to loose,
Sweet-harnessed in Love's chariot of three years.
Yet fain had Dorian tarried, while his friend
Ran the full-rounded academic race
And won its goal; when suddenly from the North
Came hot on flying hoof to Rupert's hand

A summons from his village lord and liege,
The Baron of Engelstein; a message drear
Of double darkness, like a thunder-cloud
Black on both sides with midnight, which spake thus :
“ Rupert de Lindenwald, — thy sire is dead.
Count thyself henceforth as mine armourer,
And hie thee hither. And make thou no delay ;
I hold thy sister in my hands for pledge.”

Then rose they both together and weeping went
Forth of old Padua. To Verona's walls
They came, with purpose there to part, and pass
Each to his home. But he of Château d'Or,
Who knew that farewell words are alway sad,
Wherever spoken, and most in stranger lands,
Where least we are loved and known, begged of his
friend

As a last boon, that he would ride with him
Back to Provence, and tarry at least a day
Under the roof-tree of his father's house.

“For there,” said he, “that sweetest-bitterest word
‘Farewell’ may part with half its sting, when dipped
In the honey-word of ‘home.’ Thence will we waft
thee

Swift-spurred and mounted on our best of steeds
Home to thy village sovran and liege-lord.

So shalt thou reach him sooner than with staff
And pained steps from these Verona gates.”

This said, they pricked their fiery westward way
Down the long sunset of the Lombard plains,

And passed the Rhone, whose purple-veinèd life
Threads the warm side of the Provençal land,

And on by sylvan lodge and court and grange
They flew to Château d’Or. With what a cry

Of self-renouncing ecstasy Dorian leaped

Straight from the saddle to his father’s arms.

Nor less than as a newborn son came he,

Rupert de Lindenwald, to th’ clasp and kiss

Of the brave knight. Such power there is in Love

To make the distant near, the several one,

And wind through labyrinthine shades of death
Touches of subtle-fingered threads, whereby
The darkened spirit feels toward that far light
In which the fatherless may find a father.

But what lives more forlorn and fatherless
Than he who, turning bitterly on his heart
Unnested of its hopes, broods there alone,
Refusing comfort and that baby hope
Which then comes when its mother hope departs?
The leopard springs but once upon its prey,
And failing springs not thither again, but hoards
His fiercer fang-fires for the next he meets.
Such now was Rupert even in Château d'Or,
Even where a father's and a brother's love
Lit their untiring and alternate fires
Like interchange of sunlight and of stars.
Love with his beauty and gladness, rural-rich,
Came near and touched him, but he saw them not.
He saw not when the merry-making swains

Brought mime and masque, or reeled on frolic foot
To pipe and viol and droning cornè muse.

He saw not when the cotters' brown red cheeks
Thronged blushing round the gates and bending
brought

Heart-homage and lip-service and warm tears.

He saw not when their May-sweet maidens came
Bringing him fresh-culled cresses and white curds
And amber honey fragrant of the fig,

With coronals of little flowers, that hid
Their wood-born kisses for the taintless feet
Of snowy girlhood. None of these he saw,

Save with such smiles as, darker far than frowns,
Shine dead as sunlight on a barren moor.

But when on the last morning Dorian heaved
The heavy stubbornness of those huge lids
That held the household treasures, and set free
Their gleam that sent its brief, unfruitful summer
Up the smooth wainscot panels, then the soul
Of the grave Northman flashed, and all at once

His thwarted passion couched for its new spring.
"O gold and silver," he cried, "and precious stones,
Rare dust outshaken from the skirts of Ind!
O strong divinities of the world! your might
Is more than bannered armies, and your swords
Sharper than tempered steel. All power is yours.
For gold is kingship, gold is liberty.
Love brings not gold or silver; but where gold
Reigns, there poor Love leads in his rosy boys
With all their kissing comforts and warm smiles,
Throning us happier than the painless gods.
Sayest thou, poor idle, envious heart, that gold
Is the dark root of all our evil here?
Gold was man's primal paradise, and when gold
Failed him, then preyed man on his brother's blood,
And still will prey thereon. Gold was in truth
The world's beginning, gold must be its end.
Back to such gold beginnings man must go
Ere the white marriage-morn of earth and sky
Can break with its long thousand years of love.

Give me an age of gold ; that age alone
Leads back our centuries to the years of God."

Whereat the haud of Dorian dipping low
Into a jewel-casket, to take thence
Its purest morning-star, was quick withdrawn
And raised as if in protest, while he spake :
" Nay, but I jest not : Choose before thou goest
Between these two, — an idol or a God,
Thy God and mine, the God above all others.
There is no God but Love, who leads the stars
And sows whatever is of light and life
And beauty through these acres of the world.
And such a deity thou exchangest now
For emptiness and a small ounce of gold
That leaves thee poorly rich in life's last hour,
Forsaken, lost, cast forth to utter death,
Heartless and disinherited of hope.
Oh, yet remember, how the Paduan Saint
Once preaching pointed to the rich man's bier,

Saying, ‘ “Where your treasure is, your heart is also.”
Yon greedy heart that never sighed for heaven,
Returns not to its God even through the grave.
Not in the coffin here, but there at home
In his stuffed coffer lies that dead man’s heart.’
And so they went to the usurer’s house, and found
In its own money-chest the usurer’s heart,
One knot of shrivelled canker-eaten roots,
Bloodless and hard and yellow as its gold.
And back they came to search the soulless dead,
And probed the vacant chamber, where the stilled
Life-pulses should have slept, but nothing was
Save a cold, heartless void. O Rupert, Rupert !
Take back those thoughts of thine, and for love’s sake
Have courage, rise and be thyself again.
Give me thy pledge, and on thy hand wear this,
Wherewith I wed thee now with changeless love.”

He said, and stooping to the casket, drew
From its dim night what seemed its morning-star,

A magic circlet of warm gold, wherefrom
A rainbow-colored gem rayed forth a dawn
Of light, for which Aurora might have stayed
The Day's steep horses, while she bound its fire
In the far-flowing billows of tost hair
Above the sunrise of her calm pure brow.
Down in a ghostly glen of Jinnestan
An elfin maid had wept it, and the tear,
Her last-born perfect tear, of many shed
Imperfect in their love, had sent her free
From her swart starless cavern of slow pains,
Where she had penanced, all for lack of love
Through six lone cycles, till the seventh brought
Love perfect, and therewith this perfect tear;
In whose pure light she saw the long-sought hues
Of half-remembered rainbow and sun-woofs
Of waterfall, about whose feet she had played,
Once happy in child-happiness, when hope
Shone unfulfilled, and love as yet unripe
Came sweet, and then turned bitter on her lips.

There in the netler night of that dark den
A holy dervish, planet-led, had found
This love-created wonder, and on its face
Had wrought Love's nameless name for talisman,
And circumscribed it with strange spells of might,
And so came back breathless, forespent, and pale,
Up from the terror of that underworld.
But ever afterwards, by night or day,
Sleeping or waking, he still saw and heard
The moonèd eyes of demons, and deep groan
And hollow sound of hellward-opening doors,
With voices and whatever else brings fear.

Such was this diamond, and so won ; which now
Dorian drew forth from out its hiding-place
For Rupert's hand. And sure if Love himself,
Wishing to show us how pure love is born,
Could will back from his sweetly-kingdom'd worlds
His circumfusèd and confineless soul,
And lock it up in one small prisoning stone,

He never could have chosen a nest so sweet,
A birth or bringing forth so like himself.

Then swore they friendship and eternal love,
And gave each other a parchment roll, well stored
With chosen words writ fair in black and red,
The testament of two consenting souls.
And each one crowned his brother with a hat
Decked with a heart of gold and fresh love-flowers.
Thereto Sir Dorian added as his gifts
A charm-engraven sword, whose hilt was bright
With sun-showered chrysolites and rubies red,
Sweet as the death-drops from Adonis' side,
And, — for he saw that Rupert needs must
go, —

A swift steed black and beautiful as night,
Which mounting he spurred forth toward Allemaine.

Here would I gladly pause, my brother Basil,
And rein the forward stepping of my speech,

To take new breath for more which thou wouldst learn
And I would ease my heart in telling thee.
For know this in good sooth, that old Aurelius
Would not be visiting with his latest words
Thy patient ear, while the Night's passing-bell
Tolls out the death of this her firstborn hour,
Nor would I now look back on fifty years,
A watcher from these monastery walls,
Had not the sad-starred life of Dorian sunk
Into a midnight dark and wild as this, —
A midnight which brought forth a morn to me.

Throw on fresh wood; the fire burns low; here lie
Grey beds of sparkless dust, and there the flame
Unravels its last threads of flickering light
From round the black bones of this dying hearth.
Heap high the crackling billets, till each log
Bursts into fiery foliage and brings back
Out of the glimmering dusk this antique room
With its quaint furnishing and the marble front

Of this high carven mantel, whose white squares
Glow, like the summer skies, with blue and gold.
There, Basil, it is done. And see, the Moon
Sails upward from the South through reflux surge
Of cloud, and gains the midnight of her night,
While yon wide-windowed space dilates and shrinks,
As the slant flood of beams dawns up or dies,
Or dawns again through its black-branching stems
And rich-stained oriel, where the stricken Christ
Bows mute unmurmuring to the scourge and thorn.
Now comes a gloom across the glass, and see,
His body darkens down and seems to droop
In mortal anguish, and his thorns grow sharp.
Now from the shuddering masses of torn cloud
A white fire grows and lightens o'er the panes,
And the pale body kindles, and the thorns
Break into snowy roses round his head.
And listen, Basil, to the sky's deep peace
That breathes as though afraid of its own breath.
By this the ravening North-wind has hewn out,

As with a woodman's axe, a sun-broad path
For the fair Moon to walk in, and by this
Out of her backward-flowing forest-world
Of intertangled cloud, and cloudlike leaves
And cloudborn bowers of dissolving shade,
She lifts her argent forehead to the heavens,
And looks abroad in love, and shines alone.
Hark, how her lunar soul melts forth in sound,
And all the silence overflows with song
Inaudible, but haply heard by thee.

MOON-SONG.

MOON-SONG.



Now the day's red-tressèd lion
Lies asleep, while starred Orion
Shouts, and I the spotless Dian

Lead my snowy fawns abroad,—
Calm Desire, the soul's defender,
Silent Memories sad and tender,
With unspoken vows that render

Man for every chance a god,
And there walks in midst thereof,
Crowned with godlight from above,
Stoled with starry-tissued splendor, thought's bright
Love unawed. [blender,

Of thy months the slow allotter,
I arise, O Earth, my daughter,
As a snow-flower from the water
Of the South's ensilvered sea,

And I soar with breathless going,
Holy seedlight o'er thee sowing,
Which the Sun, thy sire, bestowing
 Showers from radiant hands on me,
 Like a precious ointment poured
 On a bride's brow by her lord,
Till his glory purer growing and o'erflowing
 Streams to thee.

O sweet Earth ! behold thy mother,
Like whose love there is none other,
In whose smile each strong star-brother
 Veils his light and voice divine ;
Up this milk-white highway wheeling,
See, I send my pearl-dawn stealing,
And their diamond-dust concealing,
 Sun and system cease to shine ;
 On their orbs I rain my showers
 Soft as dew on day-sick flowers,
But with none I mix my feeling, deeply healing,
 As with thine.

When thy father's day-smiles dwindle,
I, thy mother, rise and kindle

Bright threads round my swelling spindle,
 And I watch and weave o'er thee
Noiseless nets of light unshaken,
In whose listless toils are taken
Dreams, that call on Dreams to waken
 Sweetest elfin shapes that be;
Then the soul through magic sleep
 Onward sails from deep to deep,
And the unharbored heart forsaken, wellnigh breaking,
 Rests in me.

Lo, the sun exacts each morrow
Tribute from thy fire-fed furrow,
Wealth for warmth which thou dost borrow,
 Gold fruit for his gold light sown ;
Frëer than the morn's commander,
Light unharvested I squander,
Beams that ever fruitless wander,
 Born of love, and all thine own.
Child, I nurse thee for no boot, —
 Wine or flower or fragrant root ;
Lighting thee with spirit fonder, I dart yonder
 Love alone.

When the sun's light loosens, beaming,
Half his sheaf of shafts upstreaming,
Home flies Love with all his dreaming ;
 But my light when reared above, —
Be it shield or crescent sabre, —
Calls on Love to sweetly-neighbor
Listening maid and whispering day-boor
 While he soothes his moaning dove.
 Sunlight lures, like golden fleece,
 Eastward : mine is westward peace ;
His a trumpet, mine a tabor ; his for labor,
 Mine for love.

Is all work a claim to lordship ?
When did wealth and all its worship
Fire thee to a sense of earthship,
 Kindle thee to vernal birth ?
Therefore from my hills' white highlands,
Meres and vision-peopled islands,
Wells and streams of lunar silence,
 I bring powers of purer worth,
 And I wind within the springs
Of man's higher imaginings

Spells of holy peace, till thy lands are as my lands,
Daughter Earth.

Here sits Love in silent musing,
Bright with dark threads interfusing,
Weaving webs for poets' choosing
Through my darkly-silvering shell.

Here my moon-maids, none deny it,
Feast in philosophic quiet,
Festal, free from terrene riot,
Round their cups of hydromel;
Where, by rainbow-tangled stream
Droning downward in a dream,
They drink peace, and at my fiat, sweetly sigh it
Down Night's dell.

Hark, what new song stirs my planet?
Whence these odorous airs that fan it
Round my ribs of gold and granite
And my forehead pure and white?
Like a sheep before her shearer
I wax faint, as they come clearer
From my Titan brothers nearer,
Minstrel stars of mastering night.

O sweet child, one parting kiss, —
'T is thy mother's ; and know this,
Of thy moans there comes no hearer ever dearer, —
So, Good-night !

Back through these cloud-woven valleys
Now I seek my shadowy palace,
Where each nymph her comrade rallies,
Filling founts of morn for me.
Thence all lights of Love's own legion
Through my silver-sapphired region
Soon shall throng at my decision,
And the stars shall shrink to see
Me with newly-nectared urn
Rise again, and break and burn
Thy dark nights with dawns Elysian, rich in vision,
Child, for thee.

SECOND WATCH.

II.

“MOON of the South, white-breasted bird of peace,
Why like a dove down-sliding on slow wing
In short and timorous flight, leavest thou thus
The silent heavens that wait upon thy voice,
As August woods wait on their last bird's note?
Why hastenest thou to hide thy face and quench
Thy faint song in the deserts of the dark?
Is thy pale light less lovely and are thy gleams
Less pure in their divineness than the Sun's,
Thy brother and thy bridegroom and thy lord,
That thou shouldst come in visitation thus,
Ah me! thus brief? The Sun draws forth his light
To show us all things rather than himself,

And showing men his gifts he kindles them
To gainful paths o'erblown with blinding dust,
And leads them morn by morn in murmuring throngs
To the fierce onset of the field and street,
Crying, 'Work, Work,' till work and ownership
Grow the chief end and happiness of man.
But when thou risest, nothing in heaven and earth
Is seen or heard saving thyself alone.
The world forgets itself and feels but thee,
And day's sharp sword creeps back into its sheath,
And its loud trumpet falters, when thou comest
With looks of truce, and sweetly sunderest men
With silver-sceptred silence. Oh, thy light
Was never lifted as a fiery flag
For hosts to shout by. How can armed men flash
Their orphan-making swords in thy meek face?
When catch they fire enough from thy mild eyes
To light one death-star on the bickering points
Of battle-bringing spears? For such as these
Thy reconciling day of lesser light

Was never born. \angle Thou bringest just light enough
To show two happy lovers the one face
That each has pined for through the weary noon,
Just light enough to draw two parted souls
Within the hearing of one little sigh,
Just light enough to point the shortest way
Through envious distance to the dewy nest
Where kisses meet and mix and multiply.
Just light enough for this. \angle For thou art Love,
The love that living only for love's sake
Asks nothing but to live, and be itself,
And do its own dear will. \angle And yet, sweet Moon,
Sweet maiden-mother, if thy light indeed
Be love, why changest thou from day to day,
Oh constant only in thy changefulness?
Is it that thou wouldst say to those on earth:
'I change not; 't is your shadow of change on me
That changes. I am but your dial hung
On the blue walls of these unchanging heavens,
Who by my slow mutations monish you

Of man's half-love and mutability'?

O Moon, O Mother, O my maiden queen,

Thou art the woman and the womanly

In these wide heavens; thou art the light wherethrough

All fiery lights and loves come purified

Into the lives of men; thou art love in part,

And therefore thou remainest not, but hidest

Thy near and narrower light, that so our thoughts

May pass beyond the One, and rise and reach

The Many, and so climb up to fruitfuller boughs

Of Life's ascending tree, till through its leaves

We look, and lo, a sky bent o'er the sky,

A spring beyond the spring, Gods above Gods,

Life endless, and the innumerable stars."

Soothing his heart with such soliloquies,

In the calm ebbing of a moon like this

Now westering into darkness, Dorian went,

Riding alone under great wayside oaks,

Whose black bulks, pillar-like, propped a broad shade,

That whispered scarce one secret of their lives
Of ancient leafiness to him who passed
Beneath them, lost in solitary thought.
Southward he rode through a rare night in spring,
Southward he rode toward beautiful Beaucaire
And Romalin's castle-walls. Why rode he thither?
Why spurred he always forward, far in front
Of those that followed him? And with what vows
Unheard, whose only tongue was the few tears
That rose but fell not? This I now would tell thee.

Ten times the Moon had bent her bow in heaven
Since Rupert rode away from Château d'Or,
And more than ten times ten had Dorian winged
His drooping day-dreams through the misty North
After his friend, longing exceedingly
To see his face again. For Dorian's soul
Was womanlike in all things, and his love
Grew as a maiden's for the one strong man,
Whose heart she will not lose for earth or heaven.

In vain he forged a thousand little links
From all home-keeping duties that might chain
His vagrant thoughts. In vain, with morn's fresh hour,
On tasks of self-appointed stewardship,
Guessing his father's wishes, he went forth
Among the sheepecotes and the delvers' toils,
Or on through orchard-lawns and oliveyards
And couchlike meadows, where the kine stood cool,
Knee-deep in the still stream beneath the boughs
Of some broad beech. In vain, when Evening rose
Proclaiming peace in name of all her stars,
Turned he again and sat in the great light
Of the hall's fagot-fire, and read aloud
Some poet's rolling verse, or touched the harp
And sang his father's secret sorrow away.
'T was all alike in vain. Still round him grew
That subtle spiritual overshadowing,
The unreal sadness nursed within the thoughts,
Itself a thought and feeling, such as oft
O'erclouds the springtide splendors of our youth.

Whether this come by Nature's kindly law
Tempering the too-much glory of Life's great morn,
Lest it should blind and blast us; or, if one
May make conjecture of high Wisdom's ways,
This is that merciful foretaste of the wells
Of bitterness, ere that we stoop and drink
What else must be a sharp soul-killing draught.
Be these things, brother Basil, as they may,
Such nameless woe now came on Dorian's soul,
No self-begotten grief, sprung from the void
Of wanton discontent, but something shaped
Far hence, and hither brought by God's own breath.
Even as a seaborne mist from off the sea
Gathers and darkens down a shore at noon
We know not how, and creeping inland sleeps
On the sad fields that never gave it birth.
Soon out of such dim vapor-laden moods
Came Love, which long had lain deep in his soul
Like a soft babe asleep. As yet he loved not,
But only longed to love, and ever sought

Something to love. Such now was Dorian
Swayed softly forward on the stream that sways
The world. For we must love, or else we die.

All this his father saw, then begged of him,
As of his dear, his only son, that he
Would take the vows of knighthood, and ride forth,
And kindle afresh the faded fire of fame
And honors of their half-forgotten house.
So Dorian rose and did his father's will.
And when he heard that round about Beaucaire
And up at Romalin, there were soon to be
A three days' tourney and a tilt of song,
And after these a session of Love's court,
He took his father's squire with mounted men,
And forth they set, a gallant company.

So came it, on this breathless night in spring
Dorian went riding down to Romalin.
And as he rode, he watched the skies like leaves

Above him open and shut, as 't were the book
Of Love in man's own life. For first he saw
The moon's bright body drop into the grave
Of darkness and then crumble into stars,
And so come back in starlight. Then the stars
Grew larger and came nearer one another,
And coming nearer, all their diamond fires
Melted in one great diamond of the dawn.

Calm in a sea of wonder-working lights
Of morn, like a fair isle, the castle lay,
A sheaf of towers, and every tower stood out
Rose-red in daybreak, where the walls between
Were lost in liquid shadows cold and grey.
Far off, through miles of morning air it came
So near, that Dorian thought he almost heard
The tread of warder and the trumpet-call
Blown from the battlements. In proud array
Thither they galloped, knight and squire and men.
The great sun rose; the world awoke; the bird

Piped from the tree ; man's foot was in the field.
And on they passed to Romalin's castle-gates.

And when they came, the green wide space before
The gateway was thick-sown with festal throngs,
Gay as a garden of flowers in sweet mid-June,
And there were tents and great pavilions topped
With tall red staves, whose pennons coiled and shook
Like fiery flying serpents down the breeze.
Near these a fair new tiltyard had been ploughed
By chosen milkwhite steers, that well had graced
The board of Jove, when his high godhead stooped
To feast with mortal men. All the ploughed space,
Twelve acres wide and more, was planted close
With largess of gold coin, soon to shine forth
In harvest for the ploughers. Round about,
From bar and baluster and circling seat
Grew a deep murmur, as of honey-bees
Through woody dells in spring ; and heralds went
And came in figured coats of gold, and squires

In silken scarf and vest, or now a page,
With girlish face, fair hair, and lissom limb,
Or troubadour with slow caressing hand,
That lingering up the lutestring spilled some drops
Of his love-lay long treasured. And with these
Were tender tearful maidens many a one,
And many a lovelorn man, and some that loved,
And ladies lily-necked who laughed and leaned
Across the crimson cloth that overflowed
The balconies, while now and then a knight
Came near with helm in hand, and bowed the
 knee,
And begged with yearning look a blessing bright
From the starred eyes of dame and damosel.

But Dorian came not near; he begged no boon,
He bound no lady's favor on his helm,
Rich glove or broidered sleeve. From none he
 sought
A smile, or some more precious gift of grace,

Such as the gentle give unto the strong,
Making them stronger. Pale with anxious fears,
He waited in the press of new-made knights
Beyond the tiltyard gate, and felt in truth
How oftentimes in life we are loneliest
When we are least alone. Far off the sea
Loomed southward, like a bed of burning blue,
Smoothed by the seammaids with their silken spread
Of wavy tresses, whereon Venus lay
With flowerlike feet and sunlit sides of snow.
So Dorian deemed, and straight he prayed to God,
Asking that from that day and through all years
He might serve Love, and serving win Love's crown.
Then seemed it, Venus rose from off the sea,
Her faithless, fluctuant sea, and with sweet strength
She came to him, growing heavenlier as she came.
And when the trumpet sounded, in he rode
Through the dropped barriers past the balconies,
Clad in black armour, bearing a small shield
Heart-shaped, and all of azure. On it gleamed

A sinking crescent moon, whose horns, upturned,
Shed heavenward from between them silver seeds
Of stars unnumbered, and the stars in turn
Waned upward to a seven-rayed morning star.
Close to the shield's gold rim this legend ran,
Amor omnia vincit. Such was the device.
Then all men wondered who this black knight was,
And named him there, The Knight of the Morning
Star.

And brightly did the Morning Star all day
Rise through the dust of onset and the shock
Of shivered spear-shafts. Whether on foot or
horse,
With staff or truncheon, blade or bickering lance,
Alone or in the thick of knights he rode,
Still was he foremost, not so much by force
Of bulk and thew, or cunning turns of hand,
As by a swift and supple-sinewed strength
And springing spirit, that stirred the lookers-on,
Till from all sides, like showers on summer leaves

With thunders following, came the clap of hands
And the long clamor of their stormy praise.

Nor less pre-eminent rose he in the strife
Of strings, and the twin birth of voice and verse.
For when on the fourth day they brought their harps
And psalteries, and the flowers of sound took shape,
Like God's light, at a moment's word, he rose,
When his turn came, and played and sang, and all
Praised much his song. For Dorian once had caught
A wild sad music from old Carolan, —
Carolan, a minstrel from the Land of Ire,
Poor, blind, and old, a wanderer of the world,
Who oft had sojourned in his father's halls,
And taught him in his boyhood how to play
On that sad harp of his, which ancient grief
And love had strung with wind and fire and tears,
And filled with sounds of showers and sobbing seas
And wailing waters of the darkening West.
Thus Dorian sang, — not like those mimicking jays

Who flaunt them in a patchwork of worn words
And cast-off jewels and tawdry shreds of speech,
O'erdropped with perfumes pressed from flowers long
dead.

He sang out from his soul what he found there ;
He sang of Love and Life and Sorrow and Death,
Of Knowledge and of sweet Philosophy ;
He sang how Love is mightiest of all these, —
The author and end of all things; God's great Son.
He sang of one, a maiden beautiful,
Whom he had never seen save in his dream.
He sang how a poor knight had loved her long,
How he had loved her unto death, and died,
And how they two were buried in one grave.
And all they listened with wide lips and eyes,
And when he ceased, they still sat listening all.

Who then of all the hushed throngs gathered there
But answered that to Dorian should be given
The golden violet and the Poet's crown ?

So he, about whose neck but yestereve
The baldric had been slung and victor sword
Of that year's knighthood, felt on his new brow
The laurel chaplet bright with amaranth blooms.
But how shall amaranth blooms, and laurel leaves,
And gold enamelled violet, and swift sword
With subtle-traceried baldric, slake the soul
That thirsts for life, more life, and life through love?

Meanwhile the promise of night had fallen from
heaven

In sweet surprise of stars, and the great hall
Within the castle had convened its guests,
The lords and ladies of the Court of Love,
Its servants and its vassals. The grey walls
Bloomed forth, like some dark forest in strange flowers
With arras, looms of Ylres, and brocade,
With shields and banneroles blazoned with such dyes
As autumn or bright evening lends the world.
Torches and triple crowns of twinkling lights

Bemocked the midnight skies. At the upper end,
On her high daïs-throne sat the fair queen,
Love's chosen queen, the Lady Blanchelys, —
A pale imperial face and dovelike eyes,
That still seemed sad with sweet remembered pain.
A little cap of velvet poppy-red,
Fringed with rare pearls, enthralled her back-bound
weight
Of ebon hair. A stole of snowy whiteness,
Forth-creeping from a crimson bodice, flowed
Down to her silver-slippered feet, and back
From off her small pure shoulders fell a robe
Of saffron-colored samite, like a cloud
Of summer gold. Behind her and o'erhead
Rose a broad sapphire canopy of state,
Fretted with amber. Near, a silver lamp
Fed with most fragrant oils above her drooped,
And from her left hand drooped a woven wreath
Of myrtle and young roses of the prime.
So sat the Lady Countess Blanchelys

And listened, while a service of sweet sounds
From voice and murmuring harp and soft citole
Grew up and died like a fine fragrance. Then
A glittering herald came, and stood, and made
His clear-voiced proclamation : “ Hear, O hear !
Know all ye present that this Court of Love
Is duly opened.” And forthwith a scribe
Rose in his place with scroll in hand, and called :
“ Let young Sir Dorian first stand forth and say
Wherefore he seeketh to be one of us.
What hope, or grief, or love-thought leads him hither ?
Is his heart pure ? And can he take these vows
Upon him, swearing fealty to our laws ? ”
And Dorian stood before the queen and spake :

“ If ye shall judge me worthy, gracious queen,
Ladies and lords, to take your holy vows
And be Love’s vassal, sure I am that He
Who led me hither, will lead me to life’s end.
No blossomed hope, no withered vow, no thorn

Of spurned affection, bring I here to-night,
No hate, sprung of false fancy, no black dream
Of traitorous kiss that sears both lip and heart.
For though Love's war rings round me, Love as yet
Holds but the suburbs of my soul. As one
Who am not even a novice in your church,
Unchristened and uncatechised I come.
But wherefore come I, know this simple cause,
And solve my dream. Such dreams are oft from
God.

'T is scarce a twelvemonth since I bade farewell
To one, my comrade of collegiate years,
My first friend, in whose friendship love grew strong.
Three days he tarried in my father's house
And then departed. On that day at eve,
Alone I wandered whither fancy led.
And as I strayed through lawn and grove, or stepped
Out of the moon's white glory, and sank again
Into the gloom of woodland ; line by line,
Across the tablet of the dusk, there grew

The face clear-featured of this late-gone friend,
Rising before me as one newly dead,
Whom thought decks in all virtues. Oh, he looked
Like the strong morning sun, — a power full-sphered
For knowledge and for action ; no gay god
Of gold and ivory soothed with flute and lyre,
But like some iron-moulded man, whom Thor
Himself might well have hammered out with storms
And clothed in cloud and lightning. Such seemed he,
And each remembered word of his seemed part
Of what he was ; as thus, when he would say
That man's chief end on earth should ever be
To know and do, and by such steps to climb
Into the clefts of power. Thus in mine eyes
He shone above me, and he looked so large
Through the warm clinging mists of memory
High, unattainable as the sun in heaven.
Then wearied I sank down, and leaned against
The many-centuried trunk of a huge tree ;
And slumbering there I dreamed, and in my dream

I saw the round great moon sail slowly down
Like to a silver galley, in whose arched stern,
As in a fanlike shell, two figures couched,
Each with his hand upon the helm. The one
Was pale and cold, clothed in a lucent veil
Sprinkled with stellar lights ; the other showed
A body naked, all of ruddy flame,
And on his brow burned the sole star of morn.
The first said : ‘ I am Thought ; and but for me
This mate of mine would perish self-consumed.’
But the other, kindling, answered : ‘ I am Love ;
He cannot leave me, or he dies for cold.’
Then both cried : ‘ Seeing thou must sail with us,
Choose, therefore, which of us shall hold this helm.’
And I chose him whose body was all flame,
Who, beckoning, took the helm, and I awoke.”

Sir Dorian ended. Whereupon the queen
Sent forth her soft command that he should go
Out of the hall of audience, while her court

Conferred in gentle parle and brief debate.

This done, the young knight stood a second time
Before the queen ; and when great silence came
On seat and stall, she raised her eyes and spake :

“ Thrice happy must we deem his lot, fair Sir,
Who not alone with lance and touch of harp
Can clear a wide way through the mouths of men
For his young name, but who can also choose
By his sole self such guides to lordliest life,
As thou. For as our dreams are, such are we.
Our dreams are but the mirrors of ourselves ;
We shape in thought what soon we dress in deeds.
And what we daily do within the heart
We grow to be. Our visions are ourselves.
But touching those two shapes which thou didst
see,
Be this the interpretation, these the thoughts
Which Heaven perchance would send thee. Not the
sun,

Not such as thou didst vision forth thy friend,
Not Knowledge, nor high Action, as men hold,
Nor Power drawn out through these, is Life's chief
crown.

Love's rainbow-sweep o'erarches loftier things
Than aught we know or do. Say, what is Knowledge
But fruitless garnered grain within the mind,
Unless wrought out into some pleasant food
For Thought to feed on? Lo, all Knowledge dies,
But Thought abides eternal. —What we know,
We never truly know till it be brought
Within us, born as 't were a second time
And imaged in ourselves. Then, even as sunlight
Comes purer back in moonlight, so with man
Knowledge reflected is Philosophy.
Yea, and as Thought is always more than Knowledge,
So is Love higher than work and all things done.
For, whom we love we labor for, and whom
We labor for we learn at last to love.
Some souls are moonlike, others like the sun,

And every life and shape that dawns on earth
Is but the shadow of some mightier life
That shines elsewhere for ever. Dost thou say,
Thy friend did seem the sun? Ah! surely then
Thy soul, Sir Dorian, hadst thou known thyself,
Was liker to the moon, which stooping low
Came near thee on that night, as though she sought
To find in thee some reflex of herself.
But further, when thou chocest Love o'er Thought
As holder of Life's helm, I thus would warn thee.
Say not with many who come hither: 'Love
Must live for his own sake, and so be served.'
Hear me, Sir Dorian: If the love within thee,
However holy, live for its own sake
More than for those it loves, oh then farewell
Love's triumph over death, farewell Love's last
Fidelity made mightier by despair,
Farewell the faith that follows its lost star
Down through 'hell's whirlpools and great gulfs of
night!

Love living for himself is but a dead
Kingdomless God shorn of his deity.
If those we love be less than Love, what follows ?
One dies, we say ; and soon another is sought
To serve as fuel to the hungry flame
That recks not how it feedeth, so it live.
Therefore our court ordains that every one,
Swearing allegiance to its laws, shall link
His love and thought to one sweet name, which he
Shall cherish unprofaned, and so make known
Before us, ere a year has run its round.
Love must bind Thought in links of gold, and Thought
Must call up every Dream of glorious wing
To build about that name, and shrine it close
With hallowing splendor, till its sound has grown
Like God's voice in the soul. Thus loving one
Thou mayest love many, and rise toward Life's new
morn.
Such haply was the meaning of thy shield
And the blue changing sky portrayed therein.

But now go forth ; no longer needst thou stay ;
Go, and God speed thee ! More if thou wouldst know,
Or if my farewell words might lay one law
On thy departing steps, this shalt thou do ;
Take thou the travelling staff and black rough robe
And leathern girdle such as pilgrims wear,
And steer thy footsteps to Thuringia's land.
There in its forest border thou shalt find
The dweller of an ancient hermitage,
The slow-paced shadow of its shades, a man
Of power and ministering gentleness,
Of holy heat, but calm persistent strength,
Grave-tongued and of most comfortable words ;
A searcher of all secrets, a deep seer
Through the star-motioned mazes of men's lives.
A gift he hath of prophecy, and he knows
The heart of Love. His thoughts are God's. But

now

Before thou goest, kneel and swear ; then rise
Love's bondsman and a vassal of his court."

So Dorian knelt and took Love's vow, and kissed
Christ's holy book ; then rose and rode away.

Hast thou not, Basil, often called on faith
To flatter fancy when she sweetly told,
How somewhere in this earth, beyond the din
Of traffickers and courtiers, there lives yet
Some isle or valley or woodland wilderness,
Rich in the relics of that innocent age
When men were more like Gods, and Gods like
men,
And when Gods walked with men, nor sat aloof
Looking at earth as at an alien star,
But came so near, that stream and plant and
bird,
Beast, Man, and God, all felt, in woe or weal,
In strength or sickness, one inseparate life ?
In such a land, and deep within the bourn
Of its life-teeming, self-sequestered shades,
Did Dorian stay his steps. It was a place

Of verdurous glades, the realm of sheep and deer
And squirrels and all gentle birds and beasts,
And great oaks girt with mistletoe, whose growths
Had long outrun the pruning hands of Time,
Their ancient forester, who slept in peace.
Beneath them ; and their arms, old as the heavens,
Seemed holding up each star in its bright place,
While, shod with moss, their feet were footstool'd
on

The dark roots of the world. And there were dells
Deep-gloomed, and oozy grotts where goat-foot shapes
Sprawled out their shaggy strength and dozed and
dropped

Their half-blown reed-notes down their mossy
beards.

And there were thickets thronged with phantom
fears,

And hollow places haunted by grey dreams
And aspirations of half-shapen lives,
And lairs, from out of which seemed issuing

Existences, Events, and Hours unborn,
With Prophecies of yet unhistoried years
And all beginnings of strange things to come.

Passing through these as through a vestibule
Dim-lighted, he sank down into a lawn
Columned on either side with double rank
Of giant elms, that mingling in the midst
Wrought high a leafy minster-gloom with boughs
Upspringing in steep fountains of green spray.
There at the farther end, reared altar-wise,
Gleamed a small temple-front ; and from before it
A pebble-fretted stream through the mid lawn
Ran murmuring like a clear small harp, or fell
In a flute's falling tone. And here were swells
Of fresh turf tapestried with primroses
And violets, — the innocent bridal beds
Of elves and fays on sweet midsummer's night,
Now near at hand. And here grew purple bells
To ring the faery chimes when they were wed,

And yellow cup-like flowers to glad their feast
With holy dew, the vintage of the stars.

“This is in sooth the place, and these the shades,
And yonder his retreat of whom she spake,”
Said Dorian ; and with lifted hands he knelt,
And kneeling prayed : “ O Love, most mighty Lord,
King of all mysteries, maker of the morn !
Grant me such favor in thy sight this day
That I may glean from off thy prophet’s lips
The wisdom leading to eternal peace.”
Scarcely had he said, when from a neighboring lodge
Half hid in leaves a white-haired senior stepped.
Close-girt in crimson cassock, he drew near.
His hoary locks were ivy-bound, his face
Was full of deity ; who came and spake :
“ Lo, I am he thou seekest. Follow me
To where yon temple-whiteness calls my feet.
There tarry awhile, and I will speak with thee.”
And Dorian rose and followed him, and came

To where the temple-whiteness nestling gleamed
Against a darkening wall of shade, that rose
Behind it as a rood-screen. Coming there,
He saw how all the sylvan lawns were strewn
With little companies that walked apart
Or waited or sat silent on the grass.
And some were calm and free, some wondrous sad ;
Others were sorrowful exceedingly,
And others looked unutterable prayers
Toward Death, who answered them and said, "I
come."

O Basil ! 't would have wrung thy heart with ruth
To hear them weep. Of such there were full many ;
For more than we take note of droop and die
Daily for some poor drops of common love.
And far beyond the places where these mourned
He spied through browner shades and silences
A nook of greenery, where the birch sighed slow
Her requiem of falling leaves, while earth
Like a kind mother folded back full oft

Her robe of grass and whispered, "Child, thou art
tired ;

Lie down and dream awhile." In such a spot
It were no death to die.

But now a sound
Called back his wandering glances to the shrine
Out of whose dimness there rose, prelude-like,
A slow-aspiring incense of soft song
From sweetly-wedded voices ; and that seer,
With sable pall about his shoulders thrown,
And chalice in his hands, down-stepping came
To some who waited on the lowest stair,
Kneeling in supplication, and he spake :
" Can ye indeed all taste this bitter cup ? "
And they all answered, " Yea." Then he breathed low
To each some separate, gravely-cadenced word,
And gave to all to drink, who went their ways.
And slow-returning up his marble path,
He sought the temple-shadow, and thrice again

He stooped o'er those that knelt before him there
In supplication. But each time he came
He checked his steps, as doth an ebbing wave,
Still nearer to the place whence he came forth,
And they who knelt, knelt higher upon the stairs.
With every change of station there was change
In the seer's vesture, as in changing clouds,
That clothe the shoulders of a snowy hill.
And as about the hill we hear each hour
New voices and strange answers on the air,
With endless alterations of the cloud,
So issued he, that ministering priest,
In vesture varying with each varying sound
That woke about him. Now the pall was black,
And dark and sorrow-laden was the strain.
Now it was grey, and serious and severe
And calm the music was. Next, it shone white
Mid strains like sculptured thought and cloud-repose
And sky-ascensions. At the last he came
With shoulders clothed in glory of cloth of gold ;

Then hadst thou thought that Morn was on her way,
With songs that made all stars to sing as one
And move in marriage-march to where Love sat
Star-sceptred, and there bowing, all those orbs
Shuddered like silver spray beneath his dawn.

“Draw near,” said then the holy man, “and drink,
Drink of this bitter cup which here I bring,
And listen what I say.” And Dorian came
And drank. Ay me! a bitter draught it was,
Bitter and shrewd and sharp as the salt scum
That scarfs the Dead Sea shore. So sharp it smote
Upon his lips that he grew faint, and thought
That all the tears that ever fell on earth
Had fallen, as through grief’s limbec, in that cup.
So thought he, till his own tears fell therein;
And as they fell and mingled with the draught,
He tasted in their bitterness what were
The seeds of coming sweetness. Then the seer:
“It bites thee to the soul; and well it may,

And so it doth to all who drink hereof.
Ay, and such anguish bring these drops to some,
That when they drink they die. But Love is strong.
And many have essayed this cup, and failed,
And so have put it from them ; or if they drink,
With painless dews they so benumb the sense
Or syrup-drench the palate that they kill
The immortalizing essence of the draught
Ere it can touch the soul. Now drink again.”
And Dorian drank again, and breathed and said :
“ In truth the bitterness of death is past.”

The seer was silent, and his eyes the while
Seemed searching through the future of dark years
Toward something, which came nearer till it filled
His sight with clouding sorrow. Then he said :
“ Oh, fear not thou, my son, when with these three,
With Sorrow, Knowledge, Contemplation high,
Thy love shall wrestle on thy life's hot sand.
For 't is with blood, sweat, dust, and tears of fire

That Love must be anointed and made strong.
Oh, fear not, though thy soul be clad thus thrice
In black and grey and white; for these, all these
Shall pass, and in Time's furnace change to gold.
But if thou wouldst be great in spirit, thy love
Must feed on more than on home-keeping dreams
And those thy little heart-philosophies
That serve thee daily. Love, if it would live,
Must find out for its thought some living shape,
Some shadow of Beauty as it wanders by,
Which though thou clasp it but an hour and lose it,
Yet shall it work thee life, if thou love well. }
But see, night cometh. Thou must hence to rest,
If, as thy will is, thou wouldst hie thee homeward
On early pilgrim feet the morrow morn."

So spake the white-haired elder, and he led
Back through the twilight lawn his pilgrim guest
Into the shadows round his hermitage,
Where in a leafy cabin floored with moss

Dorian soon found the dewy dower of sleep.
How long he had lain in sleep's undreaming rest
He might not say; but in that heaven-stilled hour
Which comes between the midnight and the morn,
But nearer morning, when our dreams are true,
That senior stood once more beside his couch
Holding a volume open, bringing it
So near to Dorian's eyes that he could scan
The scripted leaves, which glowed as they might be
The heart's hid missal, rich with rubric lore
And sunset stains of blue and red and gold.

“Behold the Book of Love!” said then the seer:
“Take it and hold it warm within thy robe
Near thy heart's pulses. On its leaves each day
Great Love's invisible finger, creeping soft
And slow, as with a sunbeam shall inscribe
All things whatever in his name thou doest
For whatsoever through Love's eye we see,
Or through Love's ear we hear, or in Love's heart

Conceive or purpose, whether in thought or act, —
Endures, and is imperishable and true,
Growing within us toward that greater self
Which lives and is eternal as the heavens.
All else is but the shadow of a shade,
A smoke when the fire dies, a thing of naught,
Baseless and blind as a poor idiot's dream.
Know, therefore, that whatever in pure Love
Thou doest is straightway writ within this book.
Look to 't; for when Love comes, he opens this,
And from this reads to every soul its doom."

And Dorian reached both hands and clasped the
book

And safe bestowed it in his robe's black fold
Near his heart's pulses, and so fell asleep.
Then came the daybreak, and the first thrush sang
To the still woods, *Cantate Domino*,
Till every wood-bird sang in sweet response,
Cantate Domino. Up the pilgrim rose,

And with one longing gaze to the East that heaved
Its breathless flame above the trees' black tops
He went forth toward the grey unawakened West.
All morn he pilgrimed westward, and when noon
Breathed hard with heavier breath on holt and lea,
He sat him down to rest awhile and eat
What his light scrip might yield him. Hungering
 more
For that which thought should furnish, soon he reached
His hand into the secret bosom-nest,
Where through the morn he had felt the unwonted
 weight
As of that book safe-treasured. It was gone.
Through every secret fold and safe recess,
Wallet and girdled waist, and far within
He searched, but searched in vain. Then back he fared,
Wood-wandering all the noon, and sought to come
Again into that forest hermitage
And that last leafy cell where he had slept;
But none of these he found. “Ah, what is this?”

Does Love then leave thus empty and cold and bare
The holy places which we strew for him
With gold and incense, when we bring him home
And crown him with our worship? O false Love!
Why wilt thou sing our souls from us, and buy
Our hearts' fine gold with counterfeits of Love?
Giving thy broken cisterns for our founts
Of living water, buying what is full
With aching emptiness, how art thou better
Than the fierce thirst for gold which drained the heart
Out of that Paduan usurer's heartless side,
To pay him back with grave-dust in both hands?"

Thus mourning, dark with doubt, he turned again
Westward, and there the clouds of evening shone
Like battlements of heaven, and a voice said:
"Be still; why wouldst thou mourn? All things are
thine,
Since Love himself is with thee, and is thine,
Even to the uttermost limit of the worlds."

Good Basil, reach me hither, I pray thee now,
A little wine ; my lips grow faint. And hark,
Two strokes upon the bell, and the low sound
Of those our brethren that have risen to chant
Their vigil prayer. Kneel, brother ; and if I
Through weakness may not bow my knees with thine,
Yet with bent brow and breast will I bow down
And aid their prayers with whispers heard of Christ.
Glory to thee, O God and Father in heaven !
Sweet Mary, pray for us ! Dear Jesu, save !

Look, Basil, look once more within this fire
Opening before us, through its wide-spread mouth
Of breathless beams, — a silent field unreaped
Of ripening sunlight. In its depth I see
A valley flowing with the sun's clear wine
Shed from his cup on twice twelve days of June.
Look nearer. Dost thou note how every drop
Of the sun's warmth comes back and yearns to light,
Incarnate in a rose ; how every bush,

Border and plat and couch of wayside grass
Breaks out in ruddy sparks ; how all the dell
Is dropped with rosy stars ? And hence its name,
The Valley of Roses. Roses everywhere,
Of every hue whereof a blush is born,
Of every tint that warms a maiden's cheek, —
Damask and pink and purple and sanguine-stained,
Run in red riot and hold high revelry
Up the sheer valley-thickets to those crags
Scathed by the lightning's foot and black with storm
Or down again they race through legioned ranks
Of flowering hops and purple-streaming vines
And out into the meadows. Roses, roses, —
A valley of roses ! on whose bordering height
Dorian now came. There pausing suddenly,
He looked below with thoughtful eyes, and spelt
And read the landscape slowly line by line,
And slow re-read it with a quiet love
Like his who, lighting on an antique scroll
New-found, explores the meaning of each sign

And sacred sentence, till he reads it all.
Before him dipped the middle valley, warm
With sunny pastures dotted o'er with sheep,
That like small silver clouds paced slow, or paused
In emerald heavens of meadow soft as May.
And farther down the vale a mouldered bridge
Cast its dark thoughts on the slow-coming stream,
And charming all the waters toward one arch,
Drew them beneath the hollow of its hand,
To let them slip in shallower, stormier flow
Round a steep hill's rough sides. Down the left brink
A village loitered on, with red roof-tiles
Peeping through lofty chestnut-shades and tufts
Of garden bower. And hanging high o'er these,
A sharp-toothed ridge ran always with the stream.
The ridge was black with plumage of thick firs,
And, close beneath, a silver cliff tower-crowned
Stood gaunt against the meadows. Tower with cliff
Seemed one, and storming upward, wall on wall,
Soared as an eagle from its crag, and stared

O'er all the valley, and eyed one forest road
That, like a maiden trembling from her hills,
Hushed half its sylvan voice, then venturing forth,
Looked every way and stole down to the dell.

Down through this forest hill-path Dorian dropped
Into the valley, measuring each dark step
With some new thought, but eager most to learn
His way ambiguous, and thence renew
His onward journey. Lower as he stepped,
Sweeter the fragrance of that valley came,
Let loose on fluent leagues of cool moist air,
The breathèd prayers of those hid flowers, and sweet
As are the prayers and happy thoughts of men
Heard by God's angels. Mingling soon with these
Came sounds of holiday and shout and song.
Then numbering back his weeks of pilgrimage
And counting all the days of June, he thought:
"This is the feast-day of the holy John,
The desert's Baptist-Saint. Oh for a voice

Like his, to shake the wilderness once more
And thrill its death-sands with the sounds of life,
Till Love shall come again, as Christ once came,
Burying our woes and winters deep beneath
The blossoms of the garden of the world.”
As men in talking touch on some one’s name
Whom they think far away, and all at once
Himself the wearer of that name draws nigh,
So fared it now with Dorian. For his words
Scarce left his lips, when full in sight there came
The very thing he imaged in his thoughts, —
The village street beneath its chestnut shades
With festival-keeping folk, and a long train
Of those that raised their burthen of deep song
And bore aloft like a rich-painted sail
The banner of Saint John. Leading the way,
A company of maidens, clothed upon
With maiden meekness, moved to softest pulse
Of ghitherns and soul-melting minstrelsy,
Lifting their choral chant above the strings.

Robed all in white, with roses in their hair,
Onward they came, like a slow-pacing cloud
Tenderly touched with tint of dying day.
And as one planet-circled orb o'erqueens
All her star-kindred ; or one garden-flower
Soothes the swooned air to sweet forgetfulness
Of all her neighborhood ; or one blest day
Calls on each after-day to dawn like night ;
Or one king-dream blinds every path of thought, —
Such now was she who, moving in their midst,
Lighted their lips and hands with her soul's fire,
The star and centre of her sisterhood,
Her handmaids they, and she their queen in song.

“ What angel, spared a moment from her heaven,
Is here ? ” said Dorian, then beholding her.
“ Tell me, O King of Beauty, God most high,
What dream the rosiest from thy courts of sleep
Came near and stood before thee on that morn
When thy deep love designed a life like this ?

What angel-artists of thy highest heaven,
Who frame the bright paved work beneath thy feet
Morning and evening, didst thou summon then
To lay their hands upon a mould so fair?
Who rounded that broad brow to be the dome
And temple of thy thoughts? Who arched those
gates

Through which thine own blue eyes exultingly
Look forth in hope upon the world? What spirits
Dipped deep their fingers in the wells of morn
To weave that sun-fleece showered below her waist?
Or which of those thy singing seraphim
Smoothed out this velvet voice? Oh, when didst
thou

Bring all thy Graces with their Pheidian hand
To such pure ivory-work of breast and arm,
Or wave of affluent lips, which, closing, seem
Wreathed like the little love-god's half-bent bow
Drawn for the unuttered arrow of Love's warm word,
And rose-red as the heart of Love himself?"

While thus he thought, she, singing mid her mates,
Came nearer, growing on his captured sense,
And growing deeper still within his soul.
Before her stepped with a sweet seriousness
A group of fresh-faced bachelors, cap in hand,
Turning them gracefully ever and anon
To scatter flowers beneath her maiden feet.
And all the throng fell back on either side,
And sank upon their knees, and poured a prayer
For Love's long blessing on those virgin brows
Rose-chapleted, but most of all on hers
Whom in their Godward thoughts they oft-times named
Their Lady of Comfort. Such her name in heaven,
And such on earth to many a heart that mourned.
Then, ere he knew it, Dorian too had knelt ;
Full of sweet wonder and worship, he knelt down.
Nay, not alone to Christ's dear Mother, borne
On blazoned ensign by her maidens there,
Did Dorian then bow down, love-worshipful,
And lift his holiest thought ; but to her face,

As of an angel's, he amid the rest
Knelt, and together with his bended knees
His heart knelt also. Where was then the toil,
The dust and travel of the weary weeks,
The hunger and heat and pains of pilgrimage,
The vigil-keeping sigh, and the wan thoughts
That wait on loneliness? Ah, not in vain
Seemed then those thorn-pricked pathways he had
traced,

The ride to Romalin, and the steps forlorn
Through the Thuringian forest to and fro;
For when our journeyings end in goals like this,
Then every knot upon our pilgrim-staff,
And all the windings of our wandering way,
Seem as they should be. Who would change them
then?

Who would go back along the loom of Life,
And there unwind the weft of finished years
To strike their anguish out, or wish unborn
One starry tear that shook down through our night

The shadows of a God-world else unknown ?
Even so thought Dorian as his tears fell fast
Upon his hands uplifted, which might well
Cover his lids awhile, since now his eyes
Had seen their heart's desire. Nor the first sight
Of Zion's towers and all the vale beneath,
Once trod by His blest feet who saved the world,
E'er loosed the tearful and long-travelled eyes
Of holy pilgrim in so sweet a bliss.

So passed she with her maiden minstrelsy.
And Dorian stood, and looked around as one
Who, cast adrift upon some desert isle,
Walks near the sea-foam wondering where he is,
Or what may lurk within those woods and caves.
Thus pondering, who stood near him ? Whose strong
hand
Now closed upon his shoulder ? Then whose eyes
Bent full on his, as face came close to face ?
Rupert de Lindenwald's. 'T was his indeed,

His, and none other's. Oh, what greetings then,
What long embraces, what deep joy was theirs !
And briefly Dorian flew on wings of speech
Over his journey, and told its first small cause,
And by what chance he thitherward had strayed,
A wanderer bound on quiet quests of love,
A poet-errant of the woods and hills.
And ever as he spake would Rupert's eye
Make its quick voyages 'twixt the speaker's face
And that procession, which kept coming still
With some new pageant, like a thought that flows
In trains of many-colored images, —
Knights, two and two, full-plumed and panoplied,
Slow-nodding to the heavy-gaited stride
Of their caparisoned chargers, halberdiers
With dusky-feathered helms and tasselled pikes,
Marching like forest-pines ; and here and there
The clanging stream of steel and steed would change
To gentler bands, like peeps of peaceful blue
Suddenly sent through hurtling clouds of storm.

“Sweet comrade, pardon me that here I break
Thy welcome words,” said Rupert, as he pointed
To the gay retinue of knights that passed.
“Mark well those two that, riding side by side,
Look lordlier than all others. How they blend
Their breath in earnest converse ! He this way,
Whose gory-beakèd raven waves its wing
Black on his white-faced shield, is our liege lord,
Bertram, the Lord of Engelstein, my master,
About whose double breast an hour ago
I fitted yon smooth plates. Two men he is,
Not one, — not very good, not very bad ;
Yet either of these he might be, had he strength.
But strength he has not ; so, like most weak
men,
He likes to wear the semblance of the power
Which is not his. No passion burns him deep.
He is of those who love not what is good,
Yet is afraid of goodness when it fronts him.
His strength is in the nearness of the strong.”

“And who,” said Dorian, “is so strong, and who
So near with his rough strength, as he who curbs
That full-blood Flemish stallion at his side,
And, as he speaks, holds down the russet flakes
Of his blown beard?”

And Rupert answering said :
“That is Lord Ulrich, Baron of Löwenfels,
Strong as the lion that ramps across his shield.
And many, I ween, will thank their saints to-night
When that same lion returns into his lair
Of castled mountain forty miles away.
Then whispering in low fears our folk will call him
Thief of the mist and robber of the rock.
For the small mind, while counting small things great,
Counts great things small, and sees but what is near.
But higher than the village-vision he stands,
And far above the bowshot of their talk.
No less than a Lord Paladin is he ;
His is one finger of that mighty hand
Which puts the diadem of the thronèd West

Upon the Kaiser's brow. If they were wise,
Our people would respect this Baron's will,
And help these brother-lords to holier bonds,
Long sought by both of them, in which my heart
And my good fortunes too have no small share."

"And who are these?" said Dorian,—
"dames high-
born

I take them,— who disdain to go afoot
Like all the rest, the knights alone except, —
These who in garb of nuns do pad along
On their sleek palfreys, showing now and then
A rubicund round face, too self-content
For many secret hours of toil or tears
Or prayer or penance; calling much to mind
Some warm-eyed widow flaunting her late grief
In fluttering wimple and black cyprus veil?"

"These are the ladies of the holy house
Of Saint Marcella," Rupert made reply.

“At Hohenulmen, in a neighboring vale,
Their palace-convent is; and thence they spin
Daily some subtlest thread of influences
To wind about this northern land, and win,
With innocent sophistries and godly guile,
Our strong, self-alienating Allemaine
Back to Saint Peter’s footstool, and throne high
Christ’s holy Vicar on the Vatican Mount.”

“And she,” said the other, smiling playfully,
“Yon noble lady bringing up the rear
Of Saint Marcella’s cavalcade, who turns
Her thin, raw hatchet face and staring eye
Upon us both, scanning suspiciously
My sunburnt foreign face and pilgrim weeds
And broad hat weather-stained, — say, who is she?”

And Rupert, half in spleen: “Ye South-born men
Follow too much the judgment of the eye.
She is the mouthpiece and superior

Of those that honor Saint Marcella's name,
The Lady Katarina, whose quick lips
Are steeped in streams of doctrine; and herself
And her high dames are sure foundation-stones
Of God's most holy Church. What if their rule
Be not self-crucifixion every day,
Yet 't is enough that as foundation-stones
They hold their place and prop the Church of
God."

"Well sayest thou, Rupert," sweet replied his
friend:

"The miller asks the mill-posts in his pond
To stand, and do no more. But here is one
I judge not by his body's visible veil;
And yet methinks my spirit, reaching through,
May read him as he is. What priest is he
Astride his coal-black jennet, who so close
Whispers the lady prioress and dips
His ear to catch the droppings of her tongue?"

And Rupert: "Oh that his good chance were mine!
He is the guardian of the village flock
Of Hohenulmen, and the father-priest
Of Saint Marcella's holy sisterhood, —
Hornherz by name, of stock unknown, once poor,
And chained in servitude to another's will,
As I am now. But he was wary, slow,
Self-confident, laborious; always climbing
Less by his native wit than by the shrewd
Observance of those chinks in other lives
Through which he peeped and pushed him into power.
Oft has he said to me: 'Two keys, we know,
Are needed for heaven's gates; but here on earth
Man needs but one to open and seize all power.
That key is Knowledge. He who knows the most
Will ever be the mightiest. Know the world
And rule the world. But of all sciences
The knowledge of men's faults, and where they have
failed,
Is far the first and most effectual

To curb or wind them to thy purposes.]

That gained, thou hast their armour in thy hands. ✓

For how can Knowledge profit gods or men

Or angels, if it clothe not these with power ? ’

Me ofttimes thus he counsels, and by this

He climbs where many fail ; by this even now

He guides each whisper of those convent walls,

And moulds the mandates there at Löwenfels

Which drop into our valley ; and far in Rome

His tones are not unheard in her deep voice.”

And Rupert looked once more : “ These, these,” he said

Disdainfully, pointing to a train of nuns, —

“ These which come last and seem the least, and are

Less than they seem, we name in village speech

Our little sisters of Saint Ursula.

Oh that the Saint would look to such, and give

Their bones a resting-place mid all those others

By the Rhine shore ! So would our village rest

From pious plagues which creep from house to

house,

Shedding on every hearth such fires as light
Wild hopes in idiot breasts, and teach the low
To wag the tongue against all faith and forms.
Death seize on such ! But now let us go hence.
It wants an hour of noon, and the spread feast
Under our garden-trees awaits my presence
And thine, dear guest unlooked-for."

So they went ;

And soon were come into a pleasant place
Full of sweet grass shorn smooth and flowing down
In gentlest billows to the river-marge
Rush-fringed, where the blue dragon-fly dipped light
O'er the black wrinkled water. The slant green
Was overswayed with fruit-trees, which had borrowed
Strange fantasies from the shaping wizard winds,
And stooped, and so forewent their pride of height
To bring forth fruit for man. Under the trees
Were tables decked with dainties and rich meats
In quaint devices, and great beakers brimmed

With foamy clouds, which hid their nut-brown streams
Darkling below, and silver flagonets
Flowing with Rhenish juice, whilst everywhere
Mirth and Good-cheer and Human-kindliness
Hovered on tiptoe, ready at each beck
To run as serving-men and wait on all.

There entering hastily, Dorian and his friend
Came sudden on a group of girls, one knot
Of clustering heads and gently-clamoring tongues.
“Nay now, Doretta, not a drop of dew
Lurks in the rose-leaves of thy crown.” “And yours,
Lurline, Theodolind, and Alöyse,
Are just as dewless, though ye reached beyond
The brook’s brink toward those bowers that sip the
stream
And warm it with their blushing buds.” “Lucette,
Gerta, and Hilda, ye were earliest forth
Along the cold fir-shadows, where the dew
Lives longest.” “Bertha blithe and Letta sweet,

Ye clomb the castle-rock of Fëenberg
And robbed the cave-mouth of its red moist blooms.”
“ And Fridolin and Rangold and Ysaë,
We saw you when ye clambered out to the edge
Of the Engelstein, gleaning the wild-rose there,
Filled with the morning’s mist.” “ See now whose
wreath
Still keeps its dewdrops, bringing luck in love.”
“ Oh, not one bead of the night’s wine is left
In all the rose-cups of our chaplet-crowns,
Saving in hers, our Lady of Comfort here,
Which hold the dew as fresh as when they slept
Between the nunnery-garden and those yews
Which think upon the dead.” With that they all
Came close, and caught her in their arms, and kissed
Her lips and cheeks and eyelids ; and they said :
“ This is a miracle, and thou art worthy
For whom Saint Ursula hath wrought this thing.
By this we know thy lover shall be true
For evermore. God bring thee such to-day ! ”

A moment Rupert stood, then spake ; and straight
At his loud voice those maidens turned and looked,
And fell to right and left from round her there.
And as a fisher who has toiled all night
Beneath the cold sea-stars comes with the dawn
On a low rock made white with seabirds' plumes,
And as he nears it, all the white cap lifts
Breaking, and flies in flakes of wandering wing
Hither and thither, and he lands and takes
Some spoil unravished by the wreck-strewn waves, —
So stood she forth ungirdled of her girls,
Sweetest of all sweet things, the fair Roselle.
Then Rupert, gravely smiling : " Sister dear,
Behold, I bring thee as our guest to-day
Dorian of Château d'Or, whose name full oft
Has been right welcome here, and entertained
With serviceable thoughts and thankful love,
Long ere this happy chance which brings him hither
To tarry awhile within our walls. But now,
That which we oft have given to his name while hence,

Give to himself now here, as friend and guest."
And she with grace of mien most maidenlike,
And the young summer in her face, came near
And said : " Sweet Sir, it is a pleasant thing
To greet him at our hearthside who so long
Hath sojourned in our hearts, as thou hast done.
Now would we help thee banish from thy breast
Those chilling dews of sadness such as cling
Close to the stranger's soul, till thou hast felt
That Rupert's friend is here as Rupert's self."

So saying, through the garden-lawn she went,
Leading her guest beneath a favorite tree,
From whose green rafters many a purple plum
Had dropped its ripeness in her hollowed robe,
Uplifted for the fruit in years gone by ;
And there she placed him near her kinsman's chair,
Old Eric Sternbrand, while she turned aside
On manifold ministries, to these, to those,
Among the feasters. But where'er she went,

That pilgrim's eye went with her, and where'er
His eye might journey, there she seemed to be,
Like to a fleeting flower of sunlight thrown
Here, there, and everywhere upon the grass
As the skies shut and open. Near him sat
Old Eric Sternbrand, his bewintered veins
Flushed hot with vernal vigors, and his bulk,
Like a huge viol's, rounding each great tone
With his heart's music, rough and sweet withal,
Like forest-gathered honey ; and as he marked
The pilgrim's roaming glances, he held high
His beaker of spiced brew, and spake aloud :
“ God yield thee grace, good stranger ! Thus we greet
Thy coming hither among us in Rose-Dell.
Health and All Hail we give thee in this bowl !
Yea, were it never for thine own true worth
Long known among us, yet for her sweet sake
Who brought thee hither would we greet thee now
With Health, All Hail, and thrice three times again
Health and All Hail to him we feast to-day ! ”

And then all rose, and roared from resonant throats
Their Health and Hail to him, and sat them down,
Clanging their emptied beakers to the board.

And old Sir Sternbrand bent him toward his guest,
And thus bespake him : “ Threescore years ago
My sister bare the father of yon lass,
Conrad de Lindenwald, — God rest his soul ! —
A heart of natural nobleness ; erect,
Steadfast, and silent as that pillar of rock
The Fëenberg, which his just fathers held
Four generations back, till robber-strength
And these Lord Bertrams came and cast them forth.
Would he were here to entertain thee now
Under this shade where he would sit, when eve
Thawed loose his iron hand from round the hammer,
Which glowed all day from strokes on cuisse and casque
And hauberk, forged for those who wrought him ill !
Ah God, thou knowest that blessed are the strong !
For they, and not ‘ the meek, inherit the earth.’

But, as I said, I would my sister's son,
The father of yon girl, were now alive
And here as goodman of the house ; for then
With lighter-winnowing breath her heart's blithe pulse
Would come and go ; then Sleep with speedier wing
Would kiss the tearless pillow of her cheek
Night after night. But now a heavy lot
Is hers, and heavier than her soul can bear.
What with Lord Ulrich's matrimonial hand
Thrust ever in her face ; what with his threats,
This Lord of Engelstein's, who storms and swears, —
'Thou art my ward and vassal, and I thy liege
Will wife thee where I will, and make thy body
The bond betwixt my childless flesh and his,
The Lord of Löwenfels,' — ay, what with these,
God wot she hath enough ! But then there comes
Her brother Rupert's daily-darkening frown,
He saying, ' This thy selfish, obdurate will
Keeps me in bondage to an armourer's bench,
When I might walk foot-free as castellan

At Löwenfels, and mount thence into power.’
He would relent ; but hourly at his ear
Comes whispering, Satan-like, that cleric churl
Hornherz, a busy, mischief-making man,
Born of the baser kind, and bent on rule,
Stubborn, contentious, with his rooting snout
And ready tusk tramping his neighbors’ fields,
To leave but scars and malisons behind.
Nor does he work alone, from day to day
Planting his thorns across our valley-paths
Of pastoral peace. Each scheme he sows, is watered
By those rich lady-nuns of Saint Marcella,
High born, well fed, and delicately clothed,
Who seem too nice, methinks, for God himself
With their small mincing speech and tones drawled-out
In languishing disdain, who eye with scorn
Our homelike and hearth-loving German saints
And everyday Madonnas, girt for toil,
That ask for nothing but the homespun gown
Of strong plain virtues, without ecstasies

And swoons and vanishing palms of Paradise.
The Court of Rome, but not God's Church of Rome,
Pricks the proud current of their blood. To suit
Such Roman dames all should be Roman here, —
Saints of the Roman sort and Roman name,
Saints cut by Roman pattern, painted, gilt,
Draped, and bedizened in right Roman style.
And priests should rule, and all-ungarlanded
Caesar himself should fare on foot, and bow
And peacock-fan some Pontiff who ascends
The chariot-chair of empire. These are they
Which hate our sisters of Saint Ursula,
Because they love the people and would break
All pillared wrongs, and build from such anew
The slow-redeeming charities of Time.
And in this toil of theirs they drink much strength
From that bright band of maidens whom thou sawest
Leading the rose-crowned festival-song this morn,
But most of all from her who, though she be
Of my own kindred, yet I speak the truth,

Walks the unconscious queen among her fellows.
And though her face has never lighted yet
The fortieth milestone from her father's door,
Nor her soft tongue been filed on the fine modes
And polished parley of great courts, yet she,
Bred in all gentleness of thought and deed
And in the knowledge of the fairest things
And in sweet arts and delicate ways of love,
Could shine in courts and cities as the light
Of morning on the hills. And hence those dames
Of Hohenulmen hate her, even for this,
That she excels them ; and her brightness grows
The target for their hell-shafts. She the while
Shrinks not, but fronts the enemies of the peace
Of those who bred her in their nunnery-school
To such rare beauty, that they well might seem
To have framed her as a cunning armourer doth,
Who fashions a fair buckler from pure love
Of the fair thing itself, and puts therein
Figures and elfin-work of stem and flower

And his much love and thought besides, and smooths
Its mirror to his smiles, and makes it fit
To be a miracle for the halls of kings;
And so it hangs above him, till sore need
Brings the bright work a buckler to his breast.
Even such a buckler beautiful and bright
Is she, uplifted in her loveliness
Over Saint Ursula's house, and those fair maids
Her mates, and all this village of Rose-Dell.
And as the fieriest billows of the fray
Burn round the standard, so upon her head
The darts hail hottest. But she passes on,
And the darts fly and flame, then fall and fade
Like smouldering autumn-foliage at her feet,
Nor kindle her high spirit ever a whit,
Nor leave one touch of fire on her sweet thoughts.
And when these hell-darts fail, and shadows fall, —
As fall they must round every soul that strives, —
She walks abroad all bright, and will not cast
Her shadow on other hearts, as some are wont;

But turning toward the darkness where it lies
Round other lives, she draws the veil aside,
And pours her sweet self there, — the light of heaven !
O dawn of day round many a darkened hearth !
O candle of the Lord ! that comes and goes
In silence like the light, and, like the light,
Spreading its joy and beauty on our life
In this lone vale, — the Valley of Roses named,
But none the less a valley of tears, where tears
And dews of salt must fall, and fall full oft,
To keep our roses fresh. And so it is
That sweet Roselle is canonized, and called
Our Lady of Comfort here. Nor ask us why.
Love canonizes everything he loves,
And builds a shrine and burns a taper to it,
Even if that taper be his last, with none
To light his feet through death. But we, — we wait
not
For death ; we canonize her now in life.
The children run and hold her by the hand,

The old men rise to bless her as she comes,
And the streets praise her when she passes by.
And now God turn this omen of to-day
To truth, and send her luck in love, and one
Whose love shall last unwithered as the dew
Upon her crown ! But if that may not be,
This thing is sure, — that God hath long ago
Put the troth-ring upon her hand ; and when
The trumpet sounds, the Lamb himself will come
And be her bridegroom at the wedding-feast.”

Thus through the noon talked he, this hale old
knight
Of eighty summers, with a sentence now,
And now a sup from out his flagon's flood
Of spicy breath ; and often, as he smiled,
He stopped to stanch a truant tear unseen
With his great thumb-like finger. And the noise
Of measureless mirth, loud laughter, and low speech
Made loud by the still noontide air, went on,

And merrily-singing maidens danced and dropped
Their feet like falling stars upon the grass,
Or in the pause the brazen-throated horn
Heaved hard its heavy thunder-breath, like groans
Of dying heroes and indignant ghosts
Down in their hell's red night ; and then there rose
The zitter twinkling into small quick waves
Of grief, as slow with quivering pulse intense
The close-pressed finger slid from string to string,
Making it yield in half-told ecstasies
Its little trembling anguish. Then o'er heaven
There crept those subtle workings which come on
Like old age o'er the skies, when skies fade back,
Like man's life, to the flowers of second prime ;
Such flowers as kindled on the quiet breast
Of evening, long-desired of Dorian's heart, —
Evening, that should restore his heart's best dream.

Rose-colored air all-odorous of the rose,
Breath of that coming balm wherewith still Night

Imparadises earth ; the warm faint stars
Panting forth songs unheard within their veil
Of vaporous grey, which like thin lawn enwound
The round moon's dewy lips, that rained their warmth
Of silent kisses down in silvery showers ;
Far sounds that slipped from wandering, wind-borne
harps

Beneath, above, around ; with voices heard
Of high-encamping angels, who still fanned
The dayfires on the dying cloud, or sighed
Their watchword through the valley and down the
stream

And up into the darkling belfry-domes
Of chestnuts, whispering low their vesper chime
Of peace to happy home-returning men ; —
Amid such blessedness of sights and sounds
That well might tune the chords of every sense
To joy unutterable, did she return,
She who seemed part of heaven and part of earth,
She the sweet child of two new-wedded worlds.

Across the green with gladsome look she came,
Unbound from hospitable tasks, which she
Always fulfilled with self-forgetful joy.
And as she came toward Dorian through the shades
That shook with bliss above her, sure he thought
That all those shades were now the very trees
Through whose first lispings God himself once walked
At evening in the coolness of the day ;
Seemed it his voice which made them, stirred their
leaves,
As sweet as when it woke unwedded Eve
And led her back to Adam's aching side
Mid all the chanting of the cherubim.
Then coming near, she sat beside him there.
Her heart was in her look, her smile, her word ;
And as she spake, her soul passed into his
And lodged within him, till he felt indeed
How in past days of dalliance some but came
To sojourn in the suburbs of his love,
But she now rose into the temple-height

And citadel-crown to reign there for all time.
There sat he well content, and saw her face
And heard her voice and listened to her words,
While, as a holy hermit tells his beads,
Night slipped a dewdrop down each thread of air,
And counted every prayerful breeze that sighed
In sad slow supplication to the stars.

So day succeeded unto day, so night
Trode in night's balmy steps, and both went by
With bliss for bliss. But whether it were day
That brought her back to him from worlds of sleep,
Or night which loosed her from the noiseless wheel
Of daily service, 't were all one to him ;
She came and went like light, which still is fair
At sundawn or at sunset. Absent now
From sight, or brought again within his feast
Of eye and ear, no less his queen was she.
Still o'er his thoughts the thought of her uprose,
The steady helmsman of his heart's desires,

Until she grew to be a second sense
Within his sense, a soul within his soul,
And was a part of all things that he saw
And heard, and all things came to him through her.
Did the sun laugh, it was because she smiled ;
Did morning's light wax eloquent with sound,
It was because her words were on the air ;
And heavens were blue because her eyes were so.
And as a snow-clad sisterhood of hills
Sleep in the winter moonbeams spectral-white
And motionless and silent, till the sun
Lays forth his level rose-light as a rod
On their cold lips, which tremble and let loose
Low-murmured morning psalms inaudible,
So grew his speechless worship through her dreams,
Till the pure maiden snow of her sweet thought
Turned wine-warm in the sunrise of his love.

Roselle was like the North and its dark night
Of brooding earnestness and silent stars.

Dorian was as the day, — the Southern day
In color and flash and ardor of its air.
O'er two such souls the light of love now stole
As twilight o'er the skies of morn and even,
Till each unconsciously had grown toward other.
And won in part that other's excellence.
And if thou askest me what could have drawn
Two such unequal instruments as these
Into so sweet a concord, — ask me, rather,
Why run sweet waters from their quiet hills
To toss within the salt arms of the sea ;
Ask me why briny billows chafe to change
Their salt sea-savors for the sky's cloud-sweetness ;
Or why the blind and sun-sick Afternoon
Faints for the starred fulfilment of fair Night
And all her dark embraces ; or why Night
Turns pale with anguish, pining for the kiss
Of Morning's rosy mouth ; why like loves like,
And chiefly in things that are unlike itself.
Ask me why these are thus, and I will tell thee ;

Love, our high sovereign lord, hath so ordained
That what is bounded burns beyond itself
To win through other lives a widening way,
O'er which to move, drawn by Love's gentlest might,
Toward Beauty that is boundless and for ever.

So flew the days, until the moment came
When Dorian would depart. But ere he went,
They plighted mutual troth, and vowed to hold
Each other in their hourly thoughts, and speak
Each other's name to none save God alone.
And this should be, while the sun's chariot-wheel
Made one brief turning on its annual path.
Then coming thither, Dorian would obtain
The ratifying sentence which her Lord
Of Engelstein must give, ere she could wed.
This given, she was his wife in Château d'Or.
But when in his departure he took leave
Of Rupert, then he could not but observe
His countenance cold and cheerless, more like such

As are ungently bred, or churls that live
Mean lives in outland thorps and villages.
With eyes averted and unsmiling face,
He was as one out of whose breast had passed
The native soul, and in its place was come
A soul of darkness, when with scantling speech
He muttered his "God speed" and something else,
And framed excuses, how the horses all
Were that day taken for Lord Bertram's need,
And none in all the village might be found,
No, not for one day's journey. And then he turned
Away, nor even accompanied his guest
Unto the threshold, as beseems the host,
Who looks a welcome, though he says farewell.
And thus alone, afoot and pilgrim-wise,
Just as he came, went Dorian forth again.
But wealthier than a fleet that might come home
With all Golconda for its freight, came he
Back to his father's house, and told of that
Which had befallen him ; and his sire was glad.

And when the year was wellnigh spent, he rode
Once more to Romalin, and stood approved
Of Love's high Court. Thence with his equipage
He spurred into the Northland, and besought
Lord Bertram of his grace to ratify
Their troth; and he poured out upon their love
His sanction. Greater joy his had not been,
If in that hour the hearts of all the world
Had crowned him emperor of the East and West,
Spanning his brow with rubied rim of gold.
And then and there he would have wed Roselle
And brought her to his father's home; but he,
Lord-keeper of the happiness of hundreds,
Lord of his castled hillside, and no less,
Lord of her soul's dear peace, bespake her smooth,
And prayed that she would wait a little while,
At least for some few days, until her brother
Should have returned from Löwenfels, where now
He tarried only to arrange affairs
Of gravest moment, that should much advance

The slow-ascending and long-climbing steps
Of Rupert, her kind brother, and not alone
Hers, but a brother indeed to both of them.
Then Dorian's heart, which, courier-like, ran ever
Before his lady's wishes ere they spake,
Agreed thereto. For ofttimes she had said
That Rupert, when some happier issues crowned
His long desires, would straight become himself,
And making him a home, she then could go.
"Then wait awhile," she said, "sweet Dorian, wait
No longer than until our marriage moon
Has hung up thrice-three-times her white flower-crown
Among the stars, those watchers of man's love.
And when the holy sun of Easter morn
Leaps up through lawns of light, and all things laugh,
And Earth puts off her sackcloth, and the skies
Break into singing, then the heavens shall say,
'To-morrow these shall wed.' So wait for me."
It seemed her words had hardly left her lips
To fold themselves in air, before strong March

Had come, before the nine-times-flowering Moon
Had dropped her kisses in the crocus-cups
And shed her white sleep on the violets
And storm-awakened babe-anemones,
Pale prophets of the spring. And he had come,
The bridegroom for his bride, girt with a score
Of youthful knights in all their bravery,
And page and groom and one old squire besides.

But he, albeit he came with heart ablaze
Like Love's new-lighted altar, could not pluck
Out of his secret soul what still returned
In visitations of a voice which said,
'All is not well.' Forthwith a message came
From the Lord Bertram, saying: 'That he in haste
And heedlessly withal had ratified
The troth-plight of Roselle to Dorian ;
That his sworn brother in arms, Lord Löwenfels,
Had oftentimes bowed down in his high place
To woo this maiden in her lowliness ;

But she had spurned him almost to the breach
Of amity and the breaking forth of war
Between them. Feuds like this should never be.
And therefore as her liege and lord in law,
Yea, in the place of father, he would do
According to his pleasure in this thing,
And give her unto him who claimed her hand
As her first suitor, and as worthier.'
And Dorian answered: 'If it were his will
To give the maiden to the worthier,
Then would he pray that, in a joust of arms
And in brave knightly fashion, they might prove
Which were the worthier, Löwenfels or he.
In such fair open field men soon would know
Which loved more worthily, which had drawn more
love
Out of Love's own rich wine-cup, — sweet Roselle.'

No answer was brought back; but every day
From Löwenfels there dashed some pursuivant

With clink and clatter along the village street,
And turned up toward the castle. He too came,
Hornherz, the mischief-monger, he whose hook
Was cast in all men's waters to draw thence
Some small advantage; for he was of those
To whom the foremost seat at the world's feast
Is life's first aim, to whom the shekel's gleam
Is more than all the glory of the Lord.
And thus he dropt his fire on Rupert's thoughts :

“ What vagabond, what stray tickler of the strings
With sonnet-simpering mouth and funeral face,
And love-locks leaning sideways, keep we here,
To brave us with his brandished sword, and hang
About our doorways, and defy thy lord,
And dare thy best friend to the fight? Ay, one
Who in a trice, ere thou canst heave thy hand,
Will filch from thy poor home its dearest prize.
And thou her brother, thou her nearest of kin
And God-appointed guardian, who wast born

To turn her feet to profitable paths
Both for herself and thee, — thou sittest still;
While they, who have no portion in her blood,
Arm them to rescue her from the heretic hands
Of him who flouts our holy Church, and spreads
Unfaith, rebellion, and the breach of bonds
Among this people, naturally bred
The lovers of loose thought, and lawless speech,
And equally-measured rights to rich and poor.
If Christ should come, no whip of weak small cords,
But a full scourge of scorpions would he twist
Against such ballad-singers, roysterers,
And runagates from that paradise of fools,
Provence, the death-hole and the spawning-bed
For doomed republics and old pagan dreams;
Where Plato's banished moonshine and the thrums
From Sappho's palsy-stricken harp have found
A brief, unquiet home; where the slime shoals,
Refusing sea-room to God's ark, the Church,
Give welcome to the shallow crazy keels

Of Gnostics, Arians, Ketzers, and the like,
Poor men of Lyons, heretics of Albi,
Apostates and half-Arab infidels.
And there they frame Churches and Parliaments,
Whose one religion and sole governance
Is Love, and Love forsooth their God and King;
And like most women-folk and poet-fools
They dream that Love alone can rule the world.
A godless, rebel race! Already France
Has raised the Cross against them, and ere long
France from the north and Italy from the south,
Two grinding icebergs, moved by Heaven's just breath,
Will clasp and crush and hurl this curse to hell.
And such is now the land, and such the seed,
And such the stock whereon the next hour waits
To graft this blessed flower of thine own blood.
But no! Lord Ulrich swears this shall not be,
And even now with horse and foot he comes
To spare thy hand a righteous deed, and take
This alien's life, and pay thee too in full

Thy dues for doublefacedness ; for he saith
Thou anglest with thy sister's beauty as bait
To catch his favoring breath, and winking at
A venturer, thou scorn'st the hand that lifts
The pall of a prince-prelate o'er thy back.
Then as to this thy sister, he laughs loud,
And vaunts that he has ropes and racks enough
To stretch her uncompliance to his will,
And make him pretty sport at Löwenfels.
But such he can dispense with ; for when once
This ballad-maker is earthed, then will she give
What all these women give when death comes near,—
A kick, a cry, and straight will kiss another.
And, Rupert, think how Christ hath said ; that he
Who loveth any, be it wife or child,
More than his Maker, is unworthy of heaven.
Then how much more shouldst thou prefer thy
God,
Thy Church and truth, thy sister and her soul,
Yea, and thine interest also, to this man,

Close on whose footsteps walk sure shame and death,
Whose friendship is but enmity with God !”

Darkly and fiercely as a fire that burns
Within a potter's furnace, hid from sight
Behind its iron valves ; even so the breast
Of Rupert took such words, and fired them hard
As potter's clay, within his working thoughts.

O meekest maiden heart of sweet Roselle !
O Love's warm-nested, gently-brooding bird !
What nets the fowler spreads around thee now !
Why, when thy wings were free and thy mate called
thee,

Didst thou forego to fly away where Peace
Kept a safe song-bower for thy heart ? O Love,
How couldst thou snare her fancy with fond thoughts
Of some last office unfulfilled, and lure
Her kindred-caring hand to wait one hour
. . . And mix vain honey for a brother's lips ?

Are these thy wages, Love ? and this our lot,
That we should plough and reap for thee all day,
And, when night comes, that thou shouldst call us
home

To sup on ashes mingled with our tears ?

Close to her chamber window see her wait.
The keen March weather spins a whirl of dust
Along the street, and straight is still again.
From the near cliff and crags the dun shades fall.
The night comes on apace. She shuts her book ;
It seems asleep, and slips down from her knee.
She takes her little lute and soothes its heart
With listless fingers ; then she puts it by ;
Then looks away toward her bed's glimmering white.
O sweet shut book ! over whose tear-stained words
Thy lady's eyes will pass no more. O lute !
Between whose chords her fingers, like white lilies,
Will never more shed sweetness. O pure bed !
Against whose side she never kneels again,

Leaning her breasts, which seem the twin white doves
That Mary gave to God when Christ was born.

From these now turn away thine eyes, Roselle,
Turn thy sad eyes, and look along the street.
Thy love rides late, he should have passed ere now.
There, through the deepening night, thy brother stalks
Sullen and slow adown the road, and fades
Through the thick-glooming shadows. What fell
 shapes
And pitiless eyes now grow upon thy ken !
Death-harboring spirits, dreadful faces, drawn
From every fissured rock and beetling crag,
Throng all the hanging horror of those woods,
Till the black steep down to the road is filled
With noisome breath of murder-working spells.

Hark ! heardst thou not his horse ? Thy Dorian
 comes.

Hush ! Why that sudden stop, with scuffle of feet

And stagger of hoofs, and sound of muffled strokes
And something that drops heavily down and lies
There where it fell ? A rush from every side,
And each dark window winks with instant lights,
And the street fills, and clamors rise, as when
A village has been roused at dead of night
With cries of " Fire ! Fire ! " And she, Roselle,
Before she knew it, was outside her door.
And on the tumult came ; some wept and mourned,
Some questioned, some exclaimed, some, with swords
 raised,
Flashed their unuttered curse, or looked to heaven
With imprecations as they cried aloud :
" Seize on false Rupert and those two that fled.
God give us but his body, and then let hell
Keep his lost soul." With that, lest she should see
Her Dorian's loose and lifeless length upborne
On strong men's shoulders, old Sir Sternbrand came,
And laid his hand like sleep upon her eyes,
And gently drew her back within the house.

There as she sat, her face upon her hands,
She heard one sentence, like a sound of doom,
Sighed on from door to door, from mouth to mouth :
“Dorian is dead, is dead!” And Love within
Her lonely heart made sorrowful reply :
“Is dead, is dead ; and thou art even as he !”

Then, as the dark hours darkened, every man
Called loud upon his neighbor, and all said :
“This is the day whereof the prophetess told
Four generations back, that in the fifth
This lord should be out-rooted, and a rose
Should climb and pluck yon stronghold from his
hands.

Now scale the cliff; spare not, but make an end !
Fling down his carcass hither upon our pikes,
And tumble each tower a tombstone on his grave !”
Thereat they hastened to the armourer's forge,
Eager to arm themselves, these weak, strong men,
Strong in their weakness, strong by reason of right,

To strike one last blow at the wrong, and die.
But whilst they armed, behold, the tall cliff's base
Broke sudden in a fringe of blossoming fire,
A zone of torches, which unwound and left
The cliff's round base, and coming nearer showed
A hundred halberdiers full-clad in steel
Glittering beneath the torches, as tall trees
Sheathed in clear frostwork shine i' the morning sun.

Back to that hill's high fortress, whence they came,
They took Roselle ; but not till they had passed
Over old Sternbrand's body stretched half-dead,
And left their back-fought footsteps, every one,
Wet with a passioning people's blood and tears.

Before her lord, whilst rough hands held her fast,
She stood, this Lady of Comfort, reft of all,
All the sweet kingdom of her happiness,
All the dear heritage which at morning light
The sun had seen her crowned with, as a queen.

Poor Lady of Comfort ! she so comfortless,
That even if a little of the much
That she had given of comfort unto others
Had then come back to seek a hiding-place
In her sad heart, which once had cradled it,
She surely had refused it as her guest.
She feared not. What was now to fear save this,
Lest she should live ? She could not speak nor weep,
So far below all speech and all sweet tears
Flowed her deep tide of anguish and dark love.
And these two seemed but one. She thought of all
The sin, the shame, the grief her brother had wrought ;
The danger, the distress, and the despair
Of those she loved ; the death and blighted hope
Of him who was the husband of her sonl.
Of these she thought, — if thought that may be called
Which is the present part of our own selves.
And then she yearned for death ; as they that starve
Go craving bread, so did she yearn for death
With longings of wild love unutterable.

And thus she stood before her lord, her face
One sorrowful white marble, pale and pure,
And eyes down-cast, while his jerkt words leapt forth :
' Of these, of all these troubles, she, even she,
Was the sole cause. Three days were given her
To muse in silence on her inbred sin
Of blindness and self-will. If she should then
Consent to be Lord Ulrich's wife, her seed
Should be the heirs of Engelstein. If not,
On the fourth morning, with an escort strong,
Up she should go to Löwenfels, and there,
Fast-bound by dire constraint, she soon should know
The lion's bed and be the lion's bride.'
She answered nothing ; or if ought she spake
In her pale look that moment, it did seem
As though the silver-leavèd poplar there
Before the dark door of her desolate home
Turned back one white small deprecating hand
To bless the wind that rose to buffet her.
For in her face and bearing as she stood

There dwelt so much of quiet queenliness
And sad serenity, unmixed with hate,
Pride, or self-pity, that the men-at-arms
Who stood around her scarce could stay their sobs,
That broke the silence, when they turned and led
This captive angel to her place prepared
In that high tower which frowned on all the dell.

But when the third day kissed her captive cheek,
Since Love's ear trembles to each tone of love,
Mirthful or mournful, then she heard faint sounds
From those far homes beneath, and well she knew
That they were bearing to the burial-place
Her dear dead lord, the king of all she was,
Had been, or should be, whether in life or death.
And when the darkness fell, fierce clamors rose
As of a people arming in their wrath.
Soon, as she slumbered, came the castle guards
And made her rise in haste, with only time
To throw a cloak about her, as they urged

Her naked feet fast o'er the turret stairs
Down to a darksome chamber, windowless,
Clay-floored, low-vaulted, half-hewn from the rock
Whereon the castle stood. And sure it looked
A den of cruel pain, where many a wretch
Had groaned beneath the smiling torturer's art,
Or had been done to death most miserably.
It was none other than it looked. For when
The land was heathen, this had been the hold
Of thieves and outlaws, where they stowed their spoil,
Until a race of milder-mannered men
Smoked out those hornets from the hill, and raised
Its first grey walls, and feared the name of Christ,
And fearing were baptized. But on the dawn
Of their baptismal day an angel sat
High on the cliff's clear edge, on a smooth stone,
Like a fair statue in the light, and sang,
Till the cliff shook with music, and its caves
Opened and showed the faeries deep within,
Who hymned that angel as their new-made lord,

And Christ as their new king. Wherefore the hill
Was named the Fœenberg, or Faeries' hill,
And the smooth stone the Engelstein. Thereon,
Once every seventh year, an angel sat
And sang ; but none might ever hear the song
Save such as had grown perfect in Love's ways.

In this low chamber, couched on bedded straw,
With one poor cloak for coverlet, lay Roselle.
A waning lamp breathed faint against the gloom,
Till the tired flame forgot its natural wont
And seemed to shine with darkness more than light.
For what there was of light within that den
Came not from burning lamp or kindled oil
Such as men's hands might bring, but rather came
From her who touched the straw, whereon she lay,
Into a bed of state, and poured a morn
Of gentle glory upon her prison's night.
But who may tell the anguish of her soul
As there she lay, as there she clasped her hands

Close to that sanctuary, whence her breath
Came back thrice hallowed from the heart within ?
She called on blessed Mary, Mother of Christ,
To save her, a poor-maiden most forlorn.
She called on Christ, who rose on the third day
For our deliverance, to speak the word
And loose her from that dungeon worse than death.
Even while she prayed, there woke beneath the floor
Voices and music and a measured beat
As of small hands that hammered. And when these
Had ceased, there crept a whisper through the room,
Such a weak sound as might be somewhere born
Between the silence of an evening dew
And a rain's fainting footfall on the grass.
And soon the sound became a voice and said :
"Descend this way, descend this way, Roselle."
She sat and listened ; and again the sound
Came, and again, until she rose and stood
Over a place in middle of the floor,
Whereunder, as she knelt, she heard her name

Called low with hollower voice, "Descend this way."
On the hard ground she knelt, and with both hands
Tore back the clay, some strange strength helping
her.

An hour she toiled ; then came on what did seem
A splintered coverlid of slabbèd stone,
Such as might seal some dry, deserted well.
And when she put her weak hands to the stone
To heave its weight, a power from underneath
Helped, and with force auxiliar pushed, until
By the fast-fading lamp she stooped in fear,
And looked, and lo, like a black throat it yawned
Plumb down. a perilous path of ruined stairs.
Then said the maiden's heart : " Now surely Christ
Hath sent the Angel of the Angel-Stone,
Or some imprisoned spirit of the hill,
To work me this deliverance." And she,
Feeling with unshod foot, as with a hand,
Toward the first broken resting-place of rock
And faithless footing for her trembling step,

Stole slowly down, and dropping silently,
Sank as a star sinks, and was lost in night.

But oh, that was no night wherein she sank,
Nor was that darkness, darkness unto her.
For as God folds himself in visible shade
Of tempest and black death, but feeds within
A heart, like singing summer, all of gold,
So while she felt her blindfold way, and dipt
From shade to shade, from gloom to deeper gloom,
There dawned from underneath a glimmering sound
Of harps and voices, with a rich increase
Of light that waxed in splendor as it burned
Round her bare feet and upward, till it touched
Her white thin robe and close upgathered cloak.
Doubtful she lingered. Was she still alive,
Or had her spirit then, while yet she prayed,
Stolen from its pilgrim tent of blood and breath?
That was not mortal music that she heard,
These were not shapes upbuilt on brittle bone

Which now she stooped to see. For where she
stood,
Ran a long gallery back into the mount,
Lighted far-in with gleams and golden mists,
Through which, like birds from sun-bright lands, pert
elves
Gambolled or danced with faeries of the hill.
And far behind these, diademed with light
And snowed-upon with glory, an angel sang
Mid answering angel-bands ; and marvellous
The music was. There she, with foot half-raised,
Hovered, with half intent to enter in ;
But when she thought of one dead face below,
Of his dead face which soon the envious earth
Must cover and carry down to shapeless night,
She turned her from the door of that bright place, —
Yea, from a shining seat by God's own side,
Had such been hers, would she have passed that
hour
To find him, though he spread his couch in hell.

Full fifty fathoms down her weak feet went
O'er tottering stone and step, through breathless air,
Through cold, through damp, through terrors of the pit,
Till on her hands and knees she crawled, and came
Into a low long cavern where she paused,
And heard, like sounds of earth's returning life,
The clang and clamor of the wild March wind
Round the cliff's base beneath ; and coming forth
On the black night, she knew the place to be
That cave, round whose red lip she oft had culled
The rose in happy summers far away.

Down from the cave's dark mouth she dropped, and
reached

A shelf, whence that ærial tower-crowned rock
Shot its gaunt shaft sheer from the steep hill-sward.
Thence all the way was clear unto her feet
Through darkest night. For here on her left hand
The high ridge clad with firs, that flanked the dell,
Swerved inward from the river, and smoothed a lap
Of pasture-slope, where gleamed Saint Ursula's house.

Thence downward to the river strayed a line
Of poplars, which, like chanters in a row,
Bowed all one way and sighed the selfsame prayer.
Beyond them lay the furrows dear to God,
Where yearly, as a sower unseen, God came,
Sowing the seed which man makes rich with tears.
Thither on wingèd feet, without delay,
She sped her down the unpathed precipitous hill.

It was a garden of low grass-grown graves,
Where the trees, whispering in the summer time,
Would talk about the dead in softest words,
Lest they should wake them. In the midst of this
Rose, guardian-like, a chapel which they called
The Chapel of Our Lady of the Dead.
Before the vestibule on either side
Were two great yew-trees, warders of the spot,
Twin bowers of twilight, filled with grief's own dreams
And silence and strange fear, which caught and kept
The shadow of Death whenever Death went by.

There in a niche above the white-faced porch
The image of our dead Redeemer lay,
Half-swathed for burial, stretched out stark and pale ;
And she, his blessed Mother, wan with grief,
In a white hood and folds of desolate black,
Raised her clasped hands and sorrowed o'er her Son.
Beneath them ran this scripture, writ in red :
“ Yet have we hope, sure anchor of the soul,
Which entereth into worlds behind the veil.”

Low on the threshold stone an old man sat,
Heimgang his name, the village sacristan,
His lantern streaming on the fresh-thrown clay
Of the new grave not far from where he sat.
Among the dead he seemed as one alive,
Among the living as a man long dead,
Till men might say that never was the time
When he was not ; he never had been born,
And never was to die, — a spirit that moved
Between the past and what was yet to come,

The end and the beginning of the dream
Of yesterday, to-morrow, and to-day.
Thus he, a part of life, a part of death,
Watched by the dead, or slept and watched by turns.
Thou mightst have named him, Power-in-gentleness.
A breath, a touch, and he would lightly move
To quick but quiet pity or speechless mirth,
Then would be still ; like some old willow-tree,
Nursed in low lands, with stooping strength of trunk
And playful lightning of its delicate leaves.
When the dead came to him, he welcomed them
With low-bowed face and sad compassionate smile,
And laid them down with looks of sorrowing love,
As when a mother lifts her sleeping babe
And lays it breathless in its bed of peace.

There on the threshold stone old Heimgang sat,
And heard, but heard not, as the midnight storm
Crashed through the trees and thundered up the hill.
And here and there a sudden rush of stars

Came 'twixt the hurrying billows of black cloud,
While onward with swift wings the wind o' the North
Bellowed and shrieked, as though a hundred fights
Raged through those valleys, or the trump of God
Spake its last word of doom to earth and skies.

Then Heimgang rose and took ten paces forth
To fetch his storm-tost lantern, and returned,
And sat awhile on the same threshold stone ;
When of a sudden, as though the northern blast
Were the archangel's voice that woke the dead, —
Out of the death-gloom, like one risen from death
And in her seeming shroud, sprang forth Roselle,
And, ere he could arise, beside him sat.
A bright and blessed ghost he thought it was
Which sat beside him there. But when she spake,
And, cold, crouched near him from the night's bleak air,
He knew this wind-blown flower of perishing flesh
To be Roselle, his dead friend's daughter dear,
And straightway caught and wound her body warm

In his great winter-cloak, and drew the hood
On her unpitied head, and held her close.
And she, like a poor stricken, sorrowing bird,
Leaned near the old man's heart and was at rest.
In a few short, sad, passion-broken words
She told how God had loosed her prison-bonds,
And wherefor she was come unto that place, —
Only to see him where he lay in death,
And, if kind God would loose her frozen grief,
Only to leave upon his face her tears
And last anointing from her lips of love.
“And then,” said she, “then, Heimgang, bear me
home
To the near shelter of Saint Ursula's house,
Where I would stay till God shall call me thence.”
And when she questioned him in whispered awe,
“Where hast thou laid him, Heimgang?” he, with hand
Back-pointing to the door's dark open space,
Bent down and told her in low, tearful tone,
How her dead love was lying there, within

That Chapel of Our Lady of the Dead ;
How on the morrow, or two days at most,
Yon grave must have its treasure and her own.
Then would she fain have passed at once within,
And kept her sorrow's vigil at his side
And watched with him, the living by the dead.
But in that she was weak, she begged of him
To grant her but a little breathing while,
Till she should gather strength to enter there.
And Heimgang answered, that in this brief space
Wherein she tarried, he would gladly go
For needful food and necessary things,
Such as the hour did ask ; with quick despatch
He would return. " But if," said he, " by chance
(Such chance but rarely falls) this bell above
Should move its iron lips and wake the night,
Delay not, take this lantern, pass within,
Haste to the dead man where he lies, and there
The cordials are at hand ; apply them quick,
And still apply them. I will straight be there."

At him the maiden looked with mistful eyes,
And read his meaning ; for she oft had heard
From her sweet father how in tourney fray
Strong knights had fallen by sword or thrust of lance
Or truncheon blow, and lain a week as dead,
To live again under the leechman's art.
This, therefore, was the custom of the place,
That all who ceased to breathe, but did not show
By death-taint or such veritable sign
As none might gainsay, that sure death was come,
Were brought in chest unlidded and laid there ;
And near the dead unfettered hand were placed
Cordials and rich quintessences of life,
Swift flintstones for the soul, and round the wrist
Was wound a cord, whose lightest thrill should wake
The bell to airy tremblings. Such had been
For many a year their usage in Rose-Dell.

Thus on the threshold margin, all alone,
Roselle de Lindenwald, the armourer's child,

Watched, as an angel of the dead doth watch
Near one loved lifeless face. And as she sat,
Every fine spirit that reigned in each quick sense
Forsook its faery throne of sight, or smell,
Or taste, or touch, in nice nerves numberless,
And thronged into the ear's wide palace-gates,
To listen along those audience-halls of sound.
She saw not, felt not ; she was ear, all ear ;
And her whole hearing hung upon that bell.
Then many a time the north-wind's hand would
shake
Those short, uncertain creakings toward a sound
Which made her leap and, listening half in
doubt,
Shape her cold footing toward the dead. At last
She hears the slow, dry straining of the string,
And once, twice, thrice, the bell above her peals.
Three steps toward the dark door ; the world spins
round,
She reels, and reeling falls like one struck dead.

O Hope ! O bitter balm ! O doubtful bliss !
Who minishest our pleasures, ere they come,
By foretastes given, — unhopèd-for boons being
best, —

Thou takest from thy children day by day
More than thy smiles e'er gave. Bright sorceress,
Who hangest a star-chain round our necks to-night,
And leavest us naked by to-morrow's morn,
And poorer by thy needless-added pain !
O Hope ! how dear to us are thy pure white wings,
Not always for their whiteness, but for this,
That they are wet with thy lost children's tears.

There, there she lay along the pavement cold
Of that pale chapel-porch ; the dead within,
The dead without, and she more dead between, —
She dead and motionless in sense and limb,
Memory and thought, as those that round her lay ;
But more than dead in hope, which slew her heart
With faint signs of a morn that never came.

In shorter space than that wherein the sun
Writes a half hour upon the dial's cheek
At noon, old Heimgang had returned with all
That her forewasted strength might need ; and when
He found her fallen and in such piteous plight,
He gently propped her senseless head, and chafed
Her hands, and raised her to a smooth stone seat
There in the vestibule. Then, when her spirit
Coursed back into her lips and eyes, she told
Of what had come to pass while he was gone.
And he, with lantern entering, found the dead,
As it might seem, self-moved on the right side,
And the dead hand heaved outward, and the cord
Drawn tight across the shroud. And then and there
Around the dead man wrought he diligently,
If so be there might linger along his blood
Some spark or seedling left o' the life forth gone.
But he knocked vainly at a deaf dark door,
A soul's forsaken house ; and such the word
Which Heimgang brought her where she sat without.

She heard it, and she straight became as those
Whose lives are locked within a spell, and they
Stiffen to stone; for never a word spake she
From that hour forward, nor could any know,
Whether the sacred fountain of her thoughts
Woke in one wave of beauty ere she died.
Then the old sacristan in both his arms
Enfolded and upraised her from the seat.
Across his shoulders, like a drooping sheaf,
She lay, with back-thrown head of ruined gold.
And so he brought her to Saint Ursula's house.

Thence up the village street he shaped his steps
Stealthily, to where Sir Dorian's trusty squire
Kept watch with two young knights for all the rest,
Waiting the moment when their band and they
Could ride forth safely from that dell of death.
These three he summoned privily, and with these
Came a wise man long deemed of skill divine
In leechcraft and life-renovating arts,

Who drew from plant and stone strange virtual powers,
And quickening effluence flowed from both his hands.
With shrouded lamp, with scarce a whispered word,
And pausing oft in fear, those five men wrought
Round the dead man from daybreak on till dawn,
And on from dawn till noon they wrought, nor ceased,
Till the weak vanguard of a vanquished soul
Seemed slowly lifting its faint flag from far,
And venturing timidly back to fields of life.
There toiling, in that chapel of the dead
They tarried nigh three days, but durst not bring
Their dead man to the light and life of day,
Nor make their victory known ; for armèd bands
And ridges of keen spears flashed everywhere.
And Dorian, too, was feeble ; for the sword's
Envenomed point had shot through all his blood
Its mortal tincture, and the lethe-drops
Left his wan thoughts divided, each from each.
But when three days were passed, and tidings came
That she, the angel of Saint Ursula's house,

Was gone to God, and that Lord Bertram's self
Was pity for the dead one's woes, and rage
Against her brother, on whose hiding head
His lord had laid the ban of death, which he
Had scarce escaped by flight ; then did those men
Bear Dorian after nightfall secretly
To a fair chamber, where there tended him,
By turns, the sisters of Saint Ursula.

With thought requickening, came his questioning
word ;
“ Where is she ? Is she safe, my lady dear ? ”
To which they answered : “ What thou fearest most
Can not befall her now, for she is safe,
And all is well with her, and she by this
Can not be far from home. Nor is it well
That we should answer or that thou shouldst ask
More questions, brother, whilst thou art so sick.
But when God wills it, wherefore doubt that then
Thou shalt both see and have her for thine own

For evermore ?” Thus they from hour to hour
Kept from his heart the grief they would not tell,
Till he had strength to bear it. Oh, vain dream !
To think that woes will wait till hearts are strong,
Seeing strength comes not save where grief has grown.

Meanwhile from wet calm skies there dawned a day
Of memorable mourning. Even March
Stayed his loud north-wind, and was oft in tears,
Till it seemed April had o’erleapt his bounds
To bring some gift of grief. On a high bier
Of mossèd wild flowers, overcanopied,
With unveiled face mild as a winter sun,
She lay, like a pale slumber-folded rose,
Which, lost in visions of a summer’s night,
Droops, listening to the inaudible undersong
Heard by itself alone, stealing like dew
Down through the hushèd fragrance of its heart.
So passed she through the streets, by strong men borne;
And all around wept sore, and oft the men

Who bore her paused, while many came anear
To take last looks, and kiss her hand, and weep
Unsaid farewells. And as the star of even,
Though nearest earth of all the twilight stars,
Yet, robed in saffron by the setting sun,
Seems farther from us than the farthest light
Of every orb in heaven, even so she looked
Like something distant ; a familiar shape,
Clad in strange beauty never seen before ;
A spirit, not a body, laid asleep ;
A soul made newly visible in the dress
Of her sweet deeds and unrecorded dreams.

Up in his room that overlooked the street,
Dorian lay slumbering, and beside him watched
Sister Griselda, like a flower of peace.
And when she heard the nearer, clearer sound
Of lamentation, soft she rose and stole
To the low-latticed window, and stood there,
Sorrowing in silence, as she looked below.

Oft turned she round to look at Dorian's eyes,
Praying that God would hold the gift of sleep
A little longer to the unopened lids.

But her prayer's answer came another way,
For as she prayed and looked, a new-born beam
Of morning sunlight slipt across the lids
Of him that slumbered, and he woke. And she,
Seeing his eyes full-opening, turned away
To hide the grief, while thus he questioned her,
And thus she answered, in alternate speech :

"I hear a sound of mourning in the street,
And the soft stir of slowly-stepping feet.

Say, sister, who are they that come and go?"

"They are our country folk. To-day they meet,
As is their wont, to buy and sell and greet

And tell the new things that men crave to know."

"Look forth, sweet sister ; for methinks I hear
The voice which is twin sister to the tear,

And sobs of those that check the wayward woe."

“ Good cause have they to moan ; for bread is dear,
Scant were the gleanings of their fields last year.

For men not always reap the thing they sow.”

“ Sister, what holds thee by the window ? Say,
Why turnest thou thine answering lips away,

As one that knoweth what he would not know ? ”

“ ’Tis naught. Some dead one goeth his last way.
Father, Thy will be done from day to day,

Whether we walk thine earth or sleep below ! ”

“ Dead ! Is it man or woman, old or young ?
And by what name, still dear to memory’s tongue,
Through future memories will the dead one go ? ”

“ Old, old she sank in sorrow ; yet she clung
To sorrow till dear Love the death-knell rung,
And, sighing, sewed the shroud and laid her low.”

“ Nay ; for the old what need of so much grief,
But joy, as for the ripe, home-garnered sheaf ?
Nay, sister, for the old they weep not so.”

“ Oh, brother, ask no more ! It is our chief
And crown of maidens, thy love's flower and leaf,
Round whose young grave our streams of sorrow
flow.”

While yet she spake, with wet cheeks turned
away,
He drew his body's weak weight from the bed,
And staggering to the window, there he knelt,
Saw the dead face,— groaned, fell, and knew no more.

Basil, thou weapest ! Let me also weep,
And weeping bless thee for a brother's love,
And these thy healing tears. For thou mayst know
That every sorrow-drop which thou dost give,
Falls like love's dew upon a soul which is
As near to me as I am to myself.
I was that Dorian, and Roselle was mine.
O Basil ! Basil ! let me weep awhile.
Forgive me, brother, that I can not hold
In these last hours the floodgates of a grief

Which ne'er was opened but to God and thee.
This is no weakness, Basil, to confess,
When such confessions bring most blessed balm,
Like God's last unction, to my burthened soul.
And even now 't was not my first intent
To tell thee plainly I am he, this man,
Dorian of Château d'Or; for I had thought,
In part to entertain thee with a tale
Whilst thou wert watching here, in part to find
Relief for mine own soul. But thy kind ways
Uncovered and led forth my lurking thoughts.
Yet if thou wilt believe me, O my brother!
I say thee sooth, that even while I spake,
Meseemed I saw another, not myself,
Beyond that flood of fifty flowing years.
For as the spirit of one but lately dead
Looks down in sadness with half-pitying love
On the dead face, its own, yet not its own;
So look I back toward that which once I was,
When these my feet first walked the ways of Love.

But what befell me afterward, and how
I came into this place, and how I caught
Some foregleams of yet higher and holier love, —
Of this I fain would tell thee as we sit
And talk away the watches of the night.
But now the white dust of yon dying moon
Sinks, and the stars troop downward, host by host,
In silence through the West. In their bright van
Hark ! four clear planet-voices. First he shouts,
The wingèd herald of the spheres ; him next
Their crimson champion follows, then their king ;
Last the shorn strength of their most ancient sire
Speaks, and I hear, with slow dynastic step,
God after God, faith after faith, pass by,
Till deep within the fire-veils of the night
Love answers from his yet unrisen star,
And at his word the spheres all sing for joy.

STAR-SONG.

STAR-SONG.



I. FORE-SONG.

MERCURY.

Who is this that looketh forth
With the beauty of the morning,
And the brightness of his birth
Laughs my herald light to scorning,
Like new day between the darkness and the dawning?

MARS.

Who is this to whom I yield
At his glory's far-seen shimmer,
And my sanguine-circled shield
Fades before him, dim and dimmer,
Swooning deathward as a torrent-thwarted swimmer?

JUPITER.

Who is this, whose light, like foam,
Blinds mine eyelids blithe and regal,
From whose ray comes cowering home
Knowledge, my undazzled eagle,
As in sea-waves drops a tempest-stricken sea-gull ?

SATURN.

Who is this from whom I wane,
I, a hermit pale and hoary,
Dreaming o'er my thought's domain,
I, the crownless king of story,
And my grey shape sinks unsceptred in his glory ?

THE MORNING STAR.

I am Love, and sit as God
On my silver morn-star singing ;
At my music poured abroad,
Every star, his censer swinging,
Strews the darkness with sweet echoes ever ringing.

II. STAR-SONG.

WHERE the Moon makes her nest
In the bed of the waning West,
And her veil of thin light through heaven is no more
uplifted,
We, sons of the starry morn,
Out of darkness born,
To the strand of still Night like showers of her pearl
are drifted, —
Gems from her quarried azure aglow,
Eddying flakes from her endless snow,
Gold grain on Time's threshing-floor, by the fan of his
tempest winnowed and sifted.

Lo, the Moon sinks dim
As a bead on a goblet's rim,
Whence the feaster has drained the last spark of its life
resplendent ;
And the sky's deep cup, down-turned,
With light unadorned,
Hangs hollow, jewelled with stars, above earth im-
pendent ;

And into the vessel of darkness flow
The shadows borne hither from earth below, —
A stairway stretching to heaven for Death and the
angels on Death attendant.

As a meadow-born mist
Which the cloud-shaping Sun hath kissed,
Melts earthward in showers whose many rich hues
commingle,
So the thoughts that from Man aspire
Float up through our lyre
And mix and flow back from our consonant chords
atingle,
And the sigh sent hither that seemed in vain
Returns like the sound of a springtide rain ;
For heaven and earth are one world, where none lives
alone, and nothing is single.

When Life plants the thorn
Where its roses no more are born,
And dark is the way, and the spirit is weary with
searching,
Men look unto us and live
Through the power that we give,

And strong grow their steps to the sound of our measured marching,
And we shine like silver cells inwrought
In the dome that bends over God's own thought,
Strong-pillared in Love, lifted high as Love's self, in its
infinite overarching.

Oh, the music that rings
From our harp of unnumbered strings
When that Hand is spread forth which spans all the
starry spaces !
When o'er us the world's great Soul
Is breathed, as the roll
Of a lengthening wave down the shore's loud-echoing
places ;
Then we sink as shells in the tide, we fill
With the music and might of Love's deep will,
As we sing of the yet unharvested hopes for the far
earth's happy races.

Aloft and alone,
All orbs are the wheels of thy throne.
What space can contain thee, O Life that livest for ever,

O Light beyond lights of the morn,
On whose tides we are borne,
As we drink of thy drainless heart as out of a river ?
Yet the least of the stars beneath thy feet
Is the home of thy Son, and Love's own seat,
At whose rise both twilight skies melt away in the
smiles from his love-stored quiver.

O bringer of dawn
And of dusk to a world overworn !
Sweet star, twice-named and twice-loved, of morn and of
even,
Thou ledest our planet throng
In the choral song
With thy prelude string to the strings of the starry
seven ;
And the hushed skies listen, and back there rolls,
Like a chant from a blessed chorus of souls,
The low sweet thunder of answering harps through the
deeps and the heights of heaven.

When Night goes abroad,
Assembling her senate for God,
Thou kindest thy song as a torch, and goest before us ;

And when the winter nights wane,
Thou recallest our train,
And lightest us home with the banners of morning
spread o'er us.
Thou openest our house, and we shine as kings ;
Thou shuttest the door, and the daylight springs,
O Love ! the first and the last, thou rereward and van
of the starry chorus.

All wisdom and worth,
All lights and loves upon earth,
All shapes that are born from our moods go hence or
come hither,
And angels, and Gods of the sky
Grow old and then die,
Born into new life, caught upward we know not whither, —
Yea, the stars feel the autumn's hand and fade,
By the breath of the spoiler disarrayed ;
But thine, O Love, is unwasted strength, and the lights
of thy crown cannot wither.

III. AFTER-SONG.

THE MORNING STAR.

DARK and late,

Lo, I wait

At the Night's cloud-gathering gate,
Singing like a nested love-bird newly widowed of her mate.

Sable-browed

Doors of cloud,

As they open groaning loud,
Show the black-blue skies down-stooping like the sky's
God earthward bowed.

See earth's floor

Whitening o'er,

As the slant snow's fleecy store
Blots out all the form and feature and the moods of
months before;

Like a face

Whose clear grace,

Darkening in the grave's embrace,
Fades into a blind unfeatured blank, and leaves no
wished-for trace.

He has heard
Your star-word,
And his thoughts, in sleep sweet-stirred,
Now would flutter wings of language like a long-
imprisoned bird.

Hush each sound,
As ye bound
Through your dance's thunderous round ;
List ye, drawing close about you folds of silence star-
profound.

Back ye run,
One by one,
Fiery flakes of star and sun,
Vanishing sparks from off the anvil where God's work
is but begun.

Droop and die ;
Morn is nigh,
Knowledge melts in musings high
And in Love low-breathing, like a shoreward wave's
expiring sigh.

Die away ;
And when day,
Peering forth with pearl-white ray,
Strews the black hair of the Night with dawning dust
of silver grey, —

At my call,
In gold pall
Morn shall cleave her cloudy hall,
And this soul shall tremble thither from its body's
ruined wall.

THIRD WATCH.

III.

“OH now farewell, dear Valley of the Rose,
Sweet anchorage for my soul, to which strong Love
Steered the one treasure-ship of all my thoughts
And moored it there, as in a haven of peace,
In life's young years, when Love became my king!
Farewell, thou first, last harborage of my heart!
Farewell, now fading backward from my sight,
Ye lessening lines of woodland, steep, and stream,
Thicket and rock and interfolding hill!
Dear scene, for ever dear unto my soul,
Now evermore farewell! For I go forth
As on a wintering sea, and all the lights
Die landward, and a tempest-gathering sky

Shrills its drear sounds athwart the groaning shrouds,
As outward, outward still, on wild wet wings
My soul's dark vessel ploughs a homeless path
Ne'er to be measured backward by her keel.
Farewell! But whither, whither shall I steer
My storm-rent sail? What shelter shall I seek?
Or how shall I return unto the home
Where he awaits me, — he who gave me life
And thought and all things, — he who day by day
Hangs his last hope on that which was my hope,
His life on my life's issues? O dear head,
Already stooping meekly toward the dust
Where she lies low that bare me! O grey hairs,
Turned early grey with love's unspoken grief!
This news will break thy heart. How didst thou build
On these my coming steps a bridge of gold
That should win back thy life a little way
Toward youth's reflowering shores, long dim with
death!
Even now I see thee start at every sound

Of hoof or trumpet ; now I see thee peer
Out through the green mist of the budding boughs
About our home, or haply hasten down
To bring the grace and greeting of thy love
And hold my home-brought rose within thine arms.
Still, still we come not. Then I see thee sit
By the hall-fire and gaze across its light
Toward my accustomed seat, in which thy heart
Thrones me, thy second self ; and in between,
Against the light made warmer by her looks,
She in thy fancy sits, like a fair moon
Between two kindred stars. O father dear !
Thy prayers are even as thy dreams, thy dreams
As dust ; to thee thy son returns, — alone.”

“ Alone ! ” With that sad word I turned my steed
From the last vantage-hill, whence I surveyed
The valley’s vanishing face. Then, with loose rein
And slow-descending pace, I followed those
My brother knights down to the fields beneath.

And oft alone, and riding far behind
My comrades, went I heavily those first days.
I could not speak with any, though I strove;
I could not speak with them, nor they with me,
Such woe was on us all. I could not weep;
But oh, my Basil, how the sea ran high
Within me. I was like a silent hill
In whose close-caverned breast the spring-floods groan
And pray for utterance; for it seemed that then
Sorrow had waxed so strong that Love himself
Must meet his drowning death in such a sea.
And often and wildly thus I wailed alone
In those first days, scarce knowing what I said:

“Would God my head might melt, and straight
become

A spring of flowing water, and these eyes
Twin founts of tears; so would I flow and flow,
Weeping all day and night within thy grave.
There, while the shape and shade of me should lie

Close, close beside thee, haply thou mightst hear
And half forget Death's dreamful spell, and break
With one faint smile his seal upon thy face.
There dawning back toward the grey borderland
Of this our lesser life, thy spirit might touch
And fold my spirit in its calm embrace,
Soul within soul, and bear me hence away,
That where thou art, I might for ever dwell.
But if, O Lord of all, this may not be,
If in thy wandering worlds there is no place
Where summer ripens what Love sows in spring, —
Then hear me once, this once, and hear no more.
Send me thy starry first-born Son, strong Love,
That he may sing me with his words to sleep
Eternal; for my soul flows like the sea,
And sorrows unto death. Oh, speak to Love,
And bid him speak to Time, who serveth Love;
And Time shall come, and lay me side to side
By her I love for ever, where my hand
May grow to hers, and the strong grave may melt

Both our unfeatured faces into dust.
And from our dust, made sweet with what remains
Of her pure essence, there shall rise a fount,
Quick with rekindling pulse as from one heart;
And the stream issuing from our grave's dark bed
Shall tremble into light, and all the brine
Of Life's past bitterness shall then return
To save Love's wanderers out of every land.
There shall they come and drink the marvellous boon,
And say: 'Behold the shrine of Sorrow and Love!
Here lies the Lady of Comfort, she who once
Died all for sorrow, having lived for love.
But still she liveth, still in death she speaks
To our sad hearts her comfortable words, —
Dear Lady of Comfort, strengthener of our souls.' "

With many a wailful word like this I went
By slow, short stages through those dolorous days,
Still journeying southward. And as Sorrow passed
Out of her storm into her sad serene,

Over my soul's calm surface crept the mists,
And the doubts darkened, and a voice awoke :
" Lives there in sooth, except in thine own soul,
This Lord thou namest Love ? And is He indeed
A God, the Son of God ? Oh, if a God,
Perchance some poor and powerless deity,
Cast out of heaven, to beg from door to door !
And doth Almighty Power throw his regard
On such as thou ? And what forsooth art thou,
But a brief spark struck out into the gloom
By hands unknown that strive toward larger light ?"
Thus with quick changes to and fro Love played
His passion-music through my soul, until,
More active moods returning, anger woke,
And indignation, and the God-born sense
Of wrongs done in the world. And many a time
The thought of such grew boundless, till I felt
As though the light touch of a tiger's paw
Passed through my blood. Then prayed I earnestly
That whatsoe'er I met-with in the world,

Love might not leave me. And when those young
knights

Who bare me company would oft exchange
Their love for rage, I tried to pour sweet peace
On their fierce wrath, and straight mine own was gone.

We came to Château d'Or. The courtyard gate
Swung back and forth, and creaked complainingly
Its churlish welcome. Long we stood and called.
But not a face or footfall answered us
From vacant window, gallery, step, or stair.
We stood and called. I listened. Not a rook
Above the pine-woods, nor a peacock's scream
Along the garden-terrace, made reply.
Only the unquiet courtyard gate complained,
And said : "Gone, all are gone !" Dismounting straight,
I entered, and soon came into the hall.
Before the fireless hearth, like its grey ghost,
Old Huon stood, the steward of our house.
And when he saw me, both his hands he raised,

And heaved a mercy-begging moan to Heaven,
And knelt and clasped my knees, and moaned again :
“ O my young master ! O my master’s son !
How comest thou here ? Art thou indeed alive ? ”
Whereat with no more words, but groaning deep,
He climbed the oaken staircase, and we came
Into my father’s chamber, where he stayed
My steps and turned me toward my father’s bed.
All void and blank the bed before me lay,
And desolate as a cold and cloudy sky
Which the sun leaves at noon ere night comes near.
Then on my neck he hung and wept aloud.
And loud and long we wept beside that bed ;
And ever and anon we turned and looked
Upon its hollow void, or turned away
To fold each other close and weep again.
And when our grief abated, so that we
Found words, then Huon : “ Oh, hadst thou been here
A fourteen-night ago, he might have lived.
And yet I know not. For the heavy sum

Of thy soul's bruises which thou bringest home
Had surely broken his last thread of life.
But how that thread was sundered thou shalt hear.
'Tis scarce a month to-day since in hot haste
Three horsemen galloped to our gates, and one,
Alighting, bounded up the stairs, and stalked —
Belt, boot, and spur — into this still retreat,
Where thy dear sire had kept his bed three days.
With darkening look he drew the curtain back
That shaded thy sick father's face. And he,
Thy waking sire, half-raised on his right arm,
Looked up in pale astonishment and said :
'Rupert de Lindenwald ! . . What brings thee here ?
What news ? I read some trouble in thine eyes.
Speak on.' Then he in sharp tones, hammer-like,
Rang out the story in his rough short way, —
How that thyself had perished by the hands
Of those two lords ; how all the knights were slain ;
How thy transplanted flower of Paradise
Had drooped in prison and dropped into her grave . . .

Into the parted pillow slowly sank
The sinking silent face. After long pause
He tossed his thin hand thus, as one who would
That all should leave him; then he gave one look
At Rupert, hid his face, and waved away
That bearer of the last decrees of death.
And I alone was with him to the end,
And these were all the words he ever said,
With these he died: 'O God, my son, my son!'

Pausing a moment, while a transient flush
Of indignation lightened o'er his face,
The steward thus continued: "What remains,
I fear to tell thee. Not till he was gone,
Not till that Rupert's hellward-hurrying heels
Had spurred his horse through six hours of the night,
Did I, or any of thy servants, guess
The wherefore of his coming. For he came
And went the selfsame day, and when he went,
He with his varlets, surely then he passed

Like Israel out of Egypt; for he fled
By night, and with such spoils as were not his.
O my young master! that vile hand, by thee
Enstarred with Love's own talisman, was laid
On all thy casket-gems and gold uncoined,
To bear them hence in darkness while we slept.
Michel, our page, the watchman of the hall,
They caught and left fast-bounden to a post,
Hoodwink'd and gagged, who trembling told the tale
Of what had there befallen him through the night."

When the first minstrel winds of winter lay
Their wild hands on the leafless boughs, which heave
In slow-drawn sighs, till all the forest harp
Wails o'er the buried autumn and lets loose
The sea-like music of eternity;
Then if perchance thou wanderest forth alone
Toward the sad setting of the autumnal day,
Across thy darkening spirit's instrument
There comes the rush of sad and tender thoughts

And wild regrets and mournful memories ;
And lamentations and deep dirge-like airs
Awake within thee for sweet summers gone
And the dead faces and the buried years
That never can return. All, all is lost ;
Surge upon surge of tempest-driven stars
Seems sinking to the tomb whither great God
Waits to descend : 't is Nature's burial-day.
Such, such was I in spirit at that hour ;
With desolation darker even than this,
I folded me about. What now was left ?
Father and friend and love and hope and all
Reft from me, grief and memory but remained.
In these I clothed my thoughts, on these I fed,
With these I walked and talked ; till sorrow grew
To be a sort of joy to my sad soul,
And desolation wellnigh a delight.

And in those days, be it confessed to thee,
Each fine, far-reaching tendril wherewith love

Once fingered forth its way, and touched and twined
- All things it met, was loosened and withdrawn
To undergirdle and upbear this heart,
And wreath, as t were, its ruined porch with sweets ;
Such was the bitterness that lodged within.
Nor was it strange the soul at such a time
Should ask to stay at home, and hide its grief
In self-secluding quiet, when abroad,
Through earth and air and sea and stellar space,
I heard no longer, as I used to hear,
Low sounds of concord through the frame of
things,
But one commurmurous roar of mutual strife,
And cries of ancient wrong, and trumpets blown
For truceless battle. And it seemed each day
The dawn rose wrath-red on the sinful dark,
The dark with judgment-fires rebuked the light,
And when day died, night came to weep her dew,
Answering with tears the sorrows of the world.
Then hateful grew the things that once I loved,

And hateful the sweet home where I was bred,
And hateful the green woods and pastoral walks,
And hateful ev'n the holy light of heaven ;
But hatefuller yet the light of life itself.

Then I arose and went from Château d'Or,
Forth-bound on various ventures of the sword
In Orient lands. And oft I-sailed the seas
On knightly service, wooing every chance
For deeds of desperate valor, if so be
Fate would unsheathe my spirit of this flesh.
Eastward we went. Many a fair-havened isle
Heard our down-dropping anchor. Far I roamed,
Fearless, through city and waste, and moved amid
Swart-visaged men, near neighbors of the sun,
And bearded paynims, and the turban'd heads
Of Islam. Onward still from realm to realm,
Like a tired reveller, sorrowing I passed ;
Careless yet sad, I drifted, mingling with
The masquerade o' the world.

And in that hour
Ofttimes I called on Death, and prayed and said :
“ O Death, sweet king full of most gentle grace,
Inheritor of all ! where dwellest thou ?
Where is thy sovereign seat ? What coral cave,
Made musical with waters, guards thy state
Down in the purple darkness of the deep,
Lit with the emerald lamps of nereids' eyes ?
Or dost thou couch upon some pendent rock
That nods above the glen ? What perilous reef,
Stone-showering precipice, or blazing peak,
Or woody wilderness of poisonous weeds,
Whirlpool, or smoky cataract, sand, or fire,
Now holds thy presence ? Oh that I might know
Thy hiding-place ! Then would I come to thee
As to no famished, fleshless frame of dust,
But as into the presence of some dream,
A shape as young and bright as that which once
Dawned over chaos when God smiled to see
The rosy dimness of his first-born Day

Lead out the prime and promise of the worlds.
Thus having found thy dwelling-place, O Death,
I would come near to thee and kiss thy lips ;
And having kissed thee, I would ask no more."

Thus calling oft on Death, I turned again
And sought the desolate home which I had left
For those three years of wandering. What had been
My gain, and what my losses in those years ?
Such now my question as I sat alone.
Far had I travelled, much had seen, much thought,
Much sorrowed. Ay, but Sorrow had upgrown
To such full-statured strength that Love had waned.
Weak were his powers for lack of exercise,
The circuit of his kingdom had retired,
For ever shrinking backward into self.
Nor this alone. Through all the world besides,
Love's empire so divided and distraught
Appeared to be, so small a shred remained
Of his wide-waving oriflamme, that I

Began to doubt within me whether in truth
Love were God's Son, the heir of Life and Death.
With such self-questionings I came at last
For my soul's peace into a quiet place,
A nest green-shut from noise, and named of men
La Maison de Paix-Dieu. Leagues east of this
It lay, a low-roofed home of holy men,
'Neath the far-shadowing shoulders of great hills,
Old mountain brotherhoods, with cowls of snow
And grassy cloaks and foam-white feet that flashed
Unsandalled down the darkness of the dells.

'T was in the white peace of those lowly walls
I first girt on the habit of the monk
And bowed this head for touch of hallowing hands.
There on the flagstones as I lay, outstretched
And breathless as the dead that slept below,
Over my body flowed a sable pall
Funereal, and, while many closed me round,
The Prior's deep-toned voice came near and spake :

“Wake, thou that sleepest, rise from out the dead,
And Christ shall give thee life.” Whereat his
hand

Was reached to raise me, and the pall fell off,
And I arose and stood, and walked among
My brethren as a man new-roused from sleep.
New life I felt within me, and new love
Mixed with the old, and a new name was mine.
Thenceforward was I called in common speech
Brother Aurelius. Love, who can not die,
Brought me my new name thus. Oft when I
mused

On the changed life about to be, and felt
What Sanctities enround and wait upon
Man’s mortal name, to bind its bearer back
To those sweet prophecies and maiden hopes
Which first salute it, and that earliest love
Which sheds thereon unmerchantable balms,—
I could not part with mine, but still would keep
Some musical portion of the syllables,

Now sacred, sacred only for her sake.
For had she not remoulded with her breath
That name, and given it back to me more sweet
With each day's christening dew from her dear lips ?
Ay, by that name, or by a part of it,
Somewhere along the valley-streams of Death
I must be still remembered, spoken of,
By her who drew me daily toward her light.
How often would she playfully touch the word
And harp on its first syllable, till it grew
Full of new meanings such as fancy framed.
The first and last sounds of my name and home
Would she take up, and ring through changing chimes,
As doth a love-embowered bird in spring, —
“ Mon or,” “ Mon orient,” and “ Mon estoille
d'or,” —
“ My heart of gold,” she said, “ whose worth makes
cheap
The auriferous East and all its tribute dust.”
That first last golden syllable I kept

And treasured as mine own when Dorian died
And rose again as this Aurelius.

Out of the dust, O Lord, out of the dust
I lifted then my voice, and thou didst save
My soul from mortal sorrow ; thou didst free
My sinking feet from death ; thou didst upraise
My heart on eagle's wings, and bring me home
To thy high citadels of stormless peace.
And there I found thee once again as Love,
That Love whom I had ever loved ; the same,
But greater ; clad no more in weeds of black,
With sorrow-dew and death-dust on thy cheek,
But seated soberly in serious joy
Betwixt a dead grief and a bliss to come.
Mantled in grey, as best beseemed thy state,
Who, like a hermit angel, sat'st aloof
With thy white feet o'ersown with daystar beams,
Watching the dome of darkness pale away
With promise of the morning. Thou, even thou,

Wert he, who then didst beckon me from far
To these our convent-walls, didst draw my steps
Hither, and fix my feet on this high rock.

Love led me to this place. For when I heard
That many men were come unto this hill
Seeking what heart's-ease God had planted here, —
Men who had loved much, and, like all who love,
Had suffered much, men who had found love's
fruit

Bloom to the eye and ashes to the tongue :
Moreover, when I heard that many such
Were healed, I too grew whole in mine own heart,
And being healed myself, I felt as those
Who, having 'scaped a death-plague, straight go forth
To seek the plague-struck, if by any means
They may pluck back one spirit from the grave.
Woodland and oliveyard and field and house
I sold, and giving portions to those tried
And trusty followers of my father's love,

Hither I came with all I had ; the price
I laid upon the threshold of this house,
Myself upon its altar.

Standing still

In the first moments of my sojourn here,
And looking forth, as oftentimes I did,
From this high tower of prayer, lone-islanded
Mid motionless, fixed waves of fractured rock
And grassless hillside brown and white and grey,
Hourly I questioned the new landscape's face
To learn what it would say to me ; and I thought,
As then I first beheld it, that I looked
Into what seemed a mighty heart of stone,
Out of whose shattered chambers had been swept
The first fresh bloom of bud and leaf and flower
As with a blast of fire. Such passion-scars
Were signed on splintered pinnacle and bare peak
Of basalt and black lava-ledges, trenched
With transverse valleys, where the walnut pushed

Skyward, as though she would forget the fires
That ebb'd beneath her. But on every path
Of desolation Nature's kindness came.
The slow-returning grasses whispering told
Of reconciliation, and I felt
What interchange of harmonies unheard
Oft links the soul of man to the hid soul
Of things around him. Yea, 't was there I saw
In that stone heart the visible countersign
Of many a heart about me, beating then
Alternate 'twixt its new impassioned hope
And its old thoughts of passionless despair.

But I must spur me, Basil, toward the goal
At which, with lips unharnessed, I would end
This life-tale, brief as the brief midnight fire
'Fore which I tell it. Oh that my weak breath
May yet suffice me while I strive to touch
The event wherein, by thy sweet grace, O God,
Love came to crowned completeness! Be 't enough

To summon and dismiss in fifty words
The unvarying story of as many years.
For lives of lettered men and studious toils
Chant as few changes to the external ear
As a wan summer-brook. Why need I tell
How, like poor shipwrecked folk, we gathered hope
And made this city-circled islet shine
As a far torch for sorrow-foundered men ;
How we on this hill-summit sought to catch
Each passing cloud of good, and melt its dews
Into some secret stream, that hourly fell
In benediction through the streets and homes
Of the tower-girdled city here below,
Which puts its white walls, like a woman's arm,
About our hill's rock waist, and winds its life
Still narrowing upward for our nearer smile ?

So wrought I with my brethren ; no one ruled,
But every one obeyed. And when two years
Were gone, the brotherhood made choice of me

To be their abbot. Then I wrought the more,
And strove unceasingly that I might come
Through Knowledge and high Thought to Perfect
Love,

And so come nearer to the Perfect One.

And since I was chief teacher of our school,
I prayed that power might still be given me
To teach, not mourn, but take all griefs and wrongs
And hide them as good seed within the soul.

Likewise I prayed that henceforth, when the seas
Of sorrow flowed amain, and waves beat higher,

I might build higher above the beating waves ;

As Michael, mightiest of archangels, reared

His tall church-towers on the sheer cliff of Puy,

Here in these valleys of Auvergne, or there,

By the loud Cornish coast and Breton strand,

Hung his house high above the surge that climbs

And clamors in white wrath and wreaths of spray,

And climbs and clings, but strives in vain to storm

Those heaven-descended miracles of the rock.

O ye swift years ! ye saw me then mount up
From height to height, from thought to loftier thought,
From Knowledge unto Knowledge and new dreams.
And I was as the colonist of new shores,
Who, pushing hillward from the sea's rough marge,
Draws forth his flowing fetter of long wall
And turrets inland over crest and slope,
And wins a kingdom for his name. So I
Went ever building backward from the world,
And upward into God. For I had thought
That somewhere in the unfathomable deeps
Of those cloud-wreathen valleys where the dead
Wait in the mountain-silences of God
I might, on wandering wing of prayer or thought
Or dream or spiritual rapture, come at last
Upon some voice or vision that should slake
Each day's undying thirst of this sad heart
For that one face I longed-for evermore.
'T was then that I recalled those warning words
Of the old forest-haunting seer, which said :

“Oh, fear not thou, my son, when with these three,
With Sorrow, Knowledge, Contemplation high,
Thy love shall wrestle on thy life’s hot sand !”
For had not Love within me thrown his thews
Round Sorrow, closed with him, and proved himself
Stronger than Sorrow ? Yea, and yet again,
When Knowledge came with intellectual pride
And challenged Love to match her cold smooth
 might

In mortal conflict, had not Love arisen
And won the wrestler’s wreath ? Now, last of all,
Uprose Divine Philosophy, and strove
With Love until strong Love sank wellnigh down
To small self-love and love’s indifference.
Then, then I learnt that Thought and musings high,
And Contemplation and the starry dreams
That Love enkindles, soon may lead aloft
Man’s love so far above his fellow-men
That Love may turn to loathing man and earth,
Loving but God, and seeing Heaven alone.

None other, but ev'n such an one was I,
And such had still remained, had not the event,
Which now I will unfold, befallen me
Some fifteen moons ago ; and this event,
Showing, as in a mirror, my first love
Imperfect, led me thence toward perfect love.

'T was Christmas Eve. The slowly-mouldering
brands
Had strewn their wasted splendors o'er this hearth,
Even as thou seest them now. The still mid-night
Had heard the north-wind speak, and the dusk air
Shook with its whirled white locks of wavering snow.
I, as is oft my wont, sat reading late.
It chanced that in my studies' annual round,
I was that season passing, page by page,
Down dark Tertullian's tidal eloquence.
That night I listened as he thundered on
In awful intonations, till he broke
Forth in fierce joy exulting o'er his foes,

Whose hell should furnish half his bliss of heaven :
“ Oh, how shall I rejoice, laugh, sing and dance,
When I behold our persecutors melt
In flames far fiercer than the fires they lit
Against us !” At those words the tiger touch
Thrilled my weak blood. I knelt, and veiled my face
In both my hands, and I prayed earnestly
‘ That whatsoe’er I had met-with in the world,
Love might not leave me.’

Kneeling still, I paused

In meditation ere I prayed again.
And, as I paused, a slumber and a sleep
Stole o’er me, and forthwith in spirit I stood
On a low ledge of rock, where at my feet
A rolling river of blood smote the steep flanks
Of a wide glen that, like a straight-cut trench,
Stretched a dark mile before me. On both sides
Rose two blind walls of bleached and withered cliff,
Whose ragged tops were dim with clouds that smoked

And smouldered into flame. And far away,
High in the valley's narrow gate, I spied
What seemed the well-head whence that river ran,
A runic altar, whereon stood a youth,
Immortal in his beauty, with starved face,
Torn hands, and bleeding feet, and tortured frame,
From whose rent side distilled a twin-born stream
Of water and of blood ; which, blent in one,
Lapsed broadening in its course, till all the glen
Grew loud, and shook with the swift sanguine waves
That billowed into crests of hissing fire
Round a huge galley, with strong iron sides
Rust-brown, and scarred with flame and splashed
with blood.

From the tall stern there sloped a cross that steered
With its black transverse beam, and from the stem
A hopeless anchor tempted from below
The hope of drowning hands that clutched in vain.
On the high deck a multitude looked forth
And sang, "Hosanna ! praise the Saviour-God

Who bears us on these tides that drown the world!"
Then with small crosses, like that greater cross
Which swayed them from behind, they stooped and
struck

And thrust off those who clung to stern and stem,
Saying, "Ye are not of us, get you hence
Down to your nether deep;" and so steered on
To where the racing river-cataracts
Drew to a deathly smoothness, arched, and fell,
Thundering; through fiery foam whose mists writhed up
In crimson globy clouds of quivering spray.
But ere that galley reached the gulf's dread verge,
Or passed me by, with a swift wheel to the right
It steered for the opposite shore, and entered safe
A crystal offshoot of the o'erflowing stream,
And gliding down the stillness, moored in peace.

But now I turned and looked the second time
Up the death-valley from my sentinel rock.
Oh, then my heart was torn 'twixt pity and rage,

Till pity grew the stronger, as I saw

How there was none to rescue, no, not one,

From either brink or from the heaven above.

Once, twice, and thrice I cried, and stretched my hands

Downward ; but all in vain. There, as a sea

Thick-strewn with shipwrecked men, the fire-flood
rolled,

And one cried to another, and sought to save

That other, and not himself. Some strained and strove

With desperate oarage of their hands and feet

Against the steep surge ruining from above ;

Some caught at spires of hanging rock ; and some

Thrashed with arm-flails a path through the hot surf

Toward the stream's crystal outlet, then sank back,

Crying, " O false God, redeemer named in vain,

Thou either wilt not, or thou canst not save

To the uttermost the souls that call on thee."

So passed they, one and all, down toward the gulf, —

Old men's white-flowering temples, and the heads

Of fair-haired girls, like mists of maiden gold,

And women's white round arms holding aloft
Their baby-blossoms wet with parting tears.
Then came a hush, then a shrill sound of wail,
As from a ship that sinks in a dark sea
When all are lost ; with that a reddening mist
Upsteamed through all the valley, and on mine ear
Sank the slow-lessening cries of wild farewell.

I woke, — if that were waking which prolonged
Some minutes more those lamentable cries
That tingled in mine ears and moved my soul
With love-begetting pity. Faint I woke, —
If that in sooth were waking which but hid
From these dimmed, horror-stricken eyes what thou
And I and thousands count not as a dream,
But as a shadow of the eternal truth.
Like one breath-laboring through the airless dusk
Of some foul prison-house, I rose in haste,
And flinging wide yon leaded window-panes,
I drank the wholesome air of the sweet night,

And saw the stars, and listened to the breath
And voices of the sky's deep tenderness,
And felt once more those gentle Presences
That lead forth all things toward eternal good
Both day and night. And something said to me :
"Thy dream is but a nightmare of the night,
The brief penumbra of thy passing pain
Thrown outward from thyself on these bright worlds,
The smoke of smothered vengeance in thy soul,
Which proves thy love imperfect. Perfect love
Shows nothing but a pure and smokeless fire."

So thought I, standing by the casement there.
And the clouds opened wider for the stars,
In answer to my thoughts. But still that cry,
That late-heard lamentable cry returned,
Ascending, so it seemed, to where I stood,
Out of those depths of darkness down beneath.
Downward I bent me, peering through the gloom,
Yet nothing could I see. Still, still the sound
Grew upward. Oh, my Basil, there are cries,

That pierce like arrows from a giant's hand !
But what more piercing than a helpless child's ?
Ay, Basil, as I gazed upon the sky
Listening, meseemed that every star was then
A sword's-point passing through me. " Oh, what child,
What child art thou that weepest in the night,
With none to hear thee ? Say, what are those prayers
Half-lost in thy lone crying ? " Then no more ;
But quick-descending, I drew back the bolts
And dropt the chain and opened wide our door,
And with close-lifted lantern to her face,
I saw what I had heard.

A child she was ;

For afterward I learnt she had not seen
Seven mortal years twice-numbered, yet her face
Wore all the weariness and watchful weight
Of the babe-nursing mother. Her thin cheek
Was sallow as the last October leaf,
Whose love hangs o'er the else-deserted stream.
The paly-purple bloom was on her eyes
That clothes the ungathered berries of the hill,

And her blown locks in motion and in hue
Were as the chaff that flees the thresher's hand.
I started back, for sure methought I saw
Her, my lost angel, whom I never name
Save in my prayers to God, and now to thee.
But she with half-articulate words came near,
Crying and saying: "O father, for Christ's love,
Come thou, or send with me some holy man,
To hear a last shrift; my lost father lies
At point of death." And I: "I go with thee,
My child." Then summoning no one, I went forth.
Down this high rock's white silentness we stept,
Both pale and silent, through the tost white heaps
Of the thick thwarting snowdrifts, till we reached
The storm-worn hostel of the Fleur de Lys,
Hard by Saint Étienne's gate.

Thou knowest, Basil,
Our inn's chief chamber, where the people say
Count Raymond's three fair daughters slept one night,
To leave the room still fair with Love's own dreams.
In a blue tabernacle sprent with stars,

Set in the panelled wall, the Virgin stands
White-robed, and the warm Babe clings close to her,
The Rose of Sharon cradled on her arm,
The Lily of the Valley. Her sweet look
Seems always rapt upon the sleeper's face
Over against her, watching night and morn
His sleeping and his waking. On that bed,
Half sunken in a sleepless sleep, lay one
Whose frame the north-wind might have hewn this
 night
Out of yon granite hills.

As they that come
By chance upon some giant's buried bones
Will pause and make conjecture, — who he was,
When and where lived he, what the deeds he did,
What heart was that which beat against those ribs,
What fire-thoughts flew or fluttered in that skull,
What kisses and what love-lore warmed awhile
Those unfleshed lips unloved, and who was she
Whose eyes were once to his as light to life ;
With many a like surmise, wherewith the heart

Goes feeling outward toward the hearts unknown
Of those far from us, whether in space or time, —
I gazed upon that shell of shrunken strength,
I gazed upon those sleeping lips and lids,
Waiting till they should wake. Meanwhile I learned
From her who brought me thither, how her sire
In his last voyage from the Norway shore,
The shore of her nativity and his home,
Being sore storm-bested in Normandy,
Had left his ship, and hastening overland
To a near southern port, would fain have sailed
For Rome, that he might win, if God so willed,
Saint Peter's absolution and the boon
Of apostolic peace before he died.

More she had uttered ; but her father then,
Moaning and muttering in his troubled sleep,
Seemed waking some old warfare with himself,
The deadly duel of divided thoughts.
For now his voice was full of piteous plaint,

Like one who, pleading at his judge's feet,
Would stay the coming death-doom. Now again
He was that judge high-raised above himself,
Passing stern sentence, brooking no delay.
Then with spent breath his fast-plied fingers pulled
The coverlet, as though he tried to pluck
Some few last flowers from the lost field of life,
As one that would stay longer. And with that,
His eyes he opened wide and turned on mine.
Forthwith I answered to his looks and said :
" Fair Sir, if any balm to thy heart's wound,
If any solace to a secret grief,
I have brought hither, lo, it is all thine,
Even to the pouring forth of mine own soul."
And he made answer in rough organ-tones,
As though the crashing seas he late had sailed
Still spake in his deep accents : " I had hoped
To bow these knees ere now beneath the feet
Of Christ's great Vicar, and to hear his lips
Pronounce the final pardon. But what then ?

What words did ever fan the fireless flax
To living flame again ? I need not thee,
Nor any of thy sort, save for such balm
As this my child may afterward enjoy
From thought of this thy coming here to-night.”
Whereto I made reply, imploring him
To make a last confession of his sin,
Whatever it might be ; I was as God,
To bring him there the promise of God’s peace.
He answered : “ For the unpardonable sin
There is no pardon : that thou knowest well.”

And then he fetched a heavy sigh, that spake
A heart o’erlabored with its ghostly pangs ;
And his lost soul seemed as a sinking bark
That heaves in anguish, toiling toward the shore.
I, waiting till the spasm had spent its force,
Sought, in the calm that followed, how I might
Come near his soul’s distress, beseeching him
To tell me his offence : “ And where is he,”

Said I, "whose widest wanderings ever found
A path that passed beyond the rounding rim
Of the great Mercy throned above us all?"
To which the man made answer: "Murder done,
And done as this hand did it, may not kneel
Before life-giving God, or sue his grace,
But waits for ever in the outer dark,
Unpenanced and unpardoned. Not those drops
Outsweated by the brow of Christ, or drawn
From his spear-wounded heart, can still the voice
Of that pure blood wherewith I have stained this
earth."

He ceased, and soon his thoughts were lost again
In audible communion with himself:
"Oh, if it had been ye, mine enemies,
Whose hearts my slaughtering sword had riven in
twain,
There had been hope. Oh, had it been but ye,
Ye who so oft have struck me in the strife

And shouldering madness of the market-place,
Ye who have overreached and undermined
And dug about me, compassing my fall,
Ye who have strewn my prosperous path with stones,
Who scorpion-like have fastened on the heel
That passing spurned or dazzled you; or ye,
Ye who could mock me when the tender flowers
Of home dropt into darkness one by one,
And all my wealth, as golden quicksands, failed
And melted fast beneath my sinking steps,
As low and lower I sank toward my despair, —
Oh, if it had been ye at whose curs'd lives
That sword of mine had thrust, there had been room
For hope of pardon; for where deep-sown wrongs
Spring up toward heaven in harvests of revenge,
And hate engenders hate, there still is hope
That God may light the soul's repentant showers
With some faint rainbow of absolving grace.
But it was none of these whom then I smote,
Then in the self-made madness of my soul;

But it was thou, my friend, my foremost friend,
Thou for whose heart I pledged a brother's heart,
And for a brother's won a lover's love,
Who didst me never a wrong, but wert as he
Of whose love long ago one weeping sang
And said: 'Thy love to me was wonderful,
Passing sweet woman's love.' Even him I slew, —
And all for nothing, save some flying gleams
Of power and place and a few grains of gold,
And such accursèd creeds as lead poor men
To deem they render service to high God,
To Christ, and holy Church, by deeds like mine!
Oh, lost, lost, lost beyond all hope is he
Who parts with Love as lodestar of his life!
Who craves no Knowledge save what leads to power!
Who, when he can not quench the light without,
Then frames an inner darkness for his soul,
That he may freely do whate'er he will,
Unchastened by self-blame! O'er such there falls
The night to which no daylight ever dawns."

I said within me : ' Could I now unweave
This one tyrannic woe, and draw his mind
To break each smaller separate thread in turn,
I might release him ; as the conqueror once
Who crossed the impassable river which he clave
In many a sluicèd stream.' With such intent
Once more I turned me to that suffering soul,
And prayed him earnestly, whilst thought and speech,
Those mint-marks of man's nature, yet remained,
That he would briefly bring in order forth
Such thoughts as were the fuel to his pain.

What, Basil, wouldst thou think if in some mart
Of foreign folk a stranger held thy sleeve
And told thee there thy never-uttered love
And secrets of thy soul ? Wouldst not thou feel
Like him who, hearing suddenly in the streets
Some sweet familiar music long unheard,
Turns in his musings tearfully toward the past ?
Even so, my Basil, was it then with me,

As there I sat and listened through the night
To that strange story, his, and also mine,—
His tale of anguish, and my dream of love.
Line after line, the picture of my past
Gleamed through time's mists in many-colored lights,
Like the rich-windowed West when daylight dies,—
Those first fresh Paduan mornings; that sworn faith
Of the two plighted brothers at the feast
Where great Apollo sang; that sacrament
Of fire and bread and sleep which ever binds
The guest to him who hosts him; then that oath,
That talisman and testamental gem
Of Love's own presence; last of all, that love
Which she, the valley rose, had breathed on both,
Blending all three in one. And then he told
How he had soon forsaken Love, and sought
Knowledge, but Knowledge only that should lead
To Action, that through these he might attain
To Power and sovereign sway o'er mortal men;
How Love then rose and left him, and went forth

Weeping, and from that moment life's wide ways
Grew narrower, darkening on to fields of death;
How the death-doing deed, which Satan's self
Had scorned to do, was done in Christ's dear name;
How the gold, ravished from the friend he slew,
Cancelled his exile's curse in the far North
Whither he fled, and touched with blissful warmth
And opened for him all the Norway shores
And arctic isles and treasures of the frost,
As on through nightless days and dayless nights,
A trader then, he coursed o'er seas and snows,
Bound on his perilous paths of merchandise.
And then he told me how long years went by
Unblest by love's rich light, till one came near
Who seemed a spirit sent down to earth from heaven,
Soft as a meteor of the boreal morn;
How in some sort he loved her, looked on her,
And felt he needed some one for a home.
And so he married her, — as thousands more
Who leave Love's altar, heedless of the truth

That Nature made not woman for the man,
But man for woman. So he brought her home,
Holding that God framed woman but for this, —
To wed and weave and work and bring forth babes
And serve the one whom marriage makes her lord.
Soon was all labor and but little love ;
And she, soft-framed for love, and seeking such,
Pined inwardly with uncomplaining looks.
And every new-born boy, of six that came,
Grew as the pale flowers in a sunless place
Which droop for want of warmth and wooing winds
And kisses of the sun ; till one by one
They died, and after many years there came
This last, a daughter, whom her mother named
Una, — “ My only one,” she used to say,
“ My one, my only one, my last one left
Of all my little love-created flowers,
My death-belated lambs who lost their way
Down the dim pastures where I soon shall come.”
And so she pined for lack of love, and died.

And when she died, above her grave soon sprang
The black and bitter fruit of loveless years.
Not the fruit only was he called to taste,
But a dark death-wine pressed from out that fruit
Such as he drained to its last bitter lees.
For his love-lacking usage of his kin
Passed out into the world, and now returned
To bring him Love's revenges, and to prove
That ofttimes lack-love is the heir of hate.
So what he first had meted out to men,
Men measured now to him. Oh, how they danced
Over his downfall when at last it came !
But he, as a lone lion stands at bay,
Stood there defiant, nor to man or God
Looked he for love or mercy in his need.
Had he not met the justice that he gave ?
Who shows not mercy, let him look for none.
For pity or pardon why look up to God ?
Is not God always just so much to man
As men are to each other ? " Yet for her,

For her dear sake," he said, "am I now come
Thus far toward Rome; for I had hoped to hear
The last absolving word from God's high priest,
And haply find some holy haven there
For my poor homeless Una. Mother-like,
Though but in thought a child, how has she watched
My every step, look, breath, and brought me hither,
Her heart a soaring pillar of gentle fire,
Her speech my hourly manna. One by one,
Dire need has taken from our sorrowing sight
Trinket and treasured symbol of past years, —
Yea, such necessity three days ago
Stripped the last sun-drops from yon jewelled hilt.
But she, though hope may pass, and all things fail,
Yet fails she never. Oh, God grant thee, child,
His peace, — the peace that never can be mine!"

With claspt hands, claspt yet closer to my breast,
As though I would gird-in this bursting frame,
I listened; then my eyes declining slow

From the carved ceiling to the floor, I marked
The unjewelled sword that hung against the wall,
My father's parting gift. Then mightily
I cried in silence to the silent God,
Asking that I might somehow save this soul
Through Love's own power; but first that I myself
Might rise and touch and taste the perfect gift
Of Love in mine own spirit. Turning round,
I looked upon his face. I knew him then,
I saw him as he was. Great Death stood near,
And all things now seemed nothing. Love alone
Remained. Upraising slow his dying hand,
"This hand," he cried, "this curs'd hand took his life!
Come, Death, and stamp these fingers into dust . . .
Their deed can never die. My soul is lost, —
Oh, lost, for ever lost!" And the hand fell;
And falling, lo, its finger-gem outflashed
A light that spake the present talisman
Of Love, who outlives all things; and I thought:
'Who keeps Love's symbols, Love shall keep him still.'

Then, drawing nearer to his side, I said :

“It had been well if this thy failing strength
Could have sustained thee till thine ears had heard
The pardon thou desiredst. But behold,
That door is shut. Are all doors therefore closed ?
Look up ; for though all lights on earth go out,
The stars are overhead. Why may not I,
I who am come as courier of high Love,
Bring thee the sentence which thy soul would hear ?
Upon this head of mine and on this heart
Have not the ordaining hands been long since laid ?
I also may absolve thee.” Whereto he :
“I need nor thee, nor any of thy kind,
To tell me that, which a far holier voice
Than thine or any priest’s on earth must breathe
In this mine ear.” “And whose,” I said, “whose voice
Is holier than that God’s whose voice I am, —
Whose mouthpiece are all those that speak the
truth?”

“Nay, nay,” he answered sternly ; “one alone

Can speak the pardon, — he whose voice and face
Are far from where I speak, and farther yet
From the drear night whereto I soon descend,
My last abode for ever.” “And what if he,”
I answered, “what if he should now return
From the bright isles beyond the mists of death
To tell thee that his only woe is this,
That thou dost travail with a weary load,
Which he would die again to lift from thee, —
Say, wouldst thou then receive the pardoning word,
And be at rest, and go this night to sleep
In the deep peace that broods above the stars?”
And he, with that cold smile incredulous
Which brought him back yet clearer than before:
“The dead return not ever; and if he could,
He whom I slew, — of this I am full sure,
That violated love, though strong as his,
Could not but start aghast and shrink away
Far from the presence of a soul like mine.”
“Listen,” I said; “I bring thee news from heaven.

He whom that hand of thine once felled to the
earth,

Restored in spirit is waiting at thy side
To tell thee thou art pardoned ; he is here.

Dost see him by thy bed ? ” Then he to me :

“ Now verily thou liest, thou false priest.

Hence, hence ! Go crave that pardon from thy God
Which thou wouldst palm on me ! ” “ Even while we
speak,”

I answered, “ thou mayst see his pale grey shade
Beside thy couch, ay, near enough to touch
That hand, once raised against him, which yet wears
The testament and talisman he gave thee.

Himself now speaks to thee. Hear’st not his voice,
Even now pronouncing pardon ? ” And the man,

With slow void looks cast round him to the right,
Turned his eyes farther away from where I sat,

Answering, “ I hear no voice on earth but thine
Pronouncing pardon.” “ Hearing mine,” said I,

“ Thou hearest Dorian’s voice ; for I am he.”

What followed those last words, oh, who can tell ?
With one wild cry he hurled him from that bed
And claspt my knees, and was as one disarmed
In mortal fight who holds his enemy's feet
And looks entreaties for his life, and hangs
'Twixt love and terror, gratitude and awe.
So Rupert held my knees, like one who clings
To what he fears, yet shrinks from what he loves.
And there he knelt, nor any word he spake
But "Dorian, Dorian," clinging close to me.

Then silence passed, and poured itself in showers
Of a most healing grief ; and he and I
Embraced and wept, long weeping without words.

Oh, there are moments in man's mortal years
When for an instant that which long has lain
Beyond our reach is on a sudden found
In things of smallest compass, and we hold
The unbounded shut in one small minute's space,

And worlds within the hollow of our hand, —

A world of music in one word of love,

A world of love in one quick wordless look,

A world of thought in one translucent phrase,

A world of memory in one mournful chord,

A world of sorrow in one little song.

Such moments are man's holiest, — the divine

And first-sown seeds of Love's eternity.

And such were those last moments when I sat

Beside my long-lost friend, soft-laid again

In what no longer was his lair of death,

But now his bed of glory. Life, all life,

Its terrors and its tumults and its tears,

Its hopes, its agonies and its ecstasies,

Its nights of sorrow and its dawns of joy,

Its visionary raptures and its dull,

Death-darkened hours, its longings, losses, gains,

Curses and cries and lamentations loud,

Sins, frenzies, and despairs, the monstrous births

Of thought and action groping for the light,

The false, the true, the night's red underworld
Of nadir darkness, and the zenith stars
Lost in their spherul music beating time
To every heart that hates or loves or mourns, —
These now were one, and I was one with these,
And these with me through Love's transfusing power
That passed upon me then. There as we sat, —
My brother and I, my brother made anew,
My brother thrice made mine, for ever mine,
Made one and equal with me through Love's might, —
We felt all space was ours, all time was ours;
We were as those that reign above the worlds;
And in our souls we saw the light round which
All multiformal things grow uniform,
The many sing as one. And we were one,
Calm-seated in the heaven that overflows
With the world's music of perpetual peace.

Then, as the night grew darker toward the morn,
And on from year to year our thoughts flew back,

As birds from land to land, and his brief speech
Came brief and briefer with his sinking strength,
He oftentimes would turn to me and say :

“ Sweet brother, if an angel sent from God
Had brought me word, I scarce had then believed
That thou couldst thus forgive, or I receive
What I disdained to take, as undeserved.
But now, behold, I take, and take with love
Grown larger, what thou givest, and ask but Heaven
And Heaven’s long summer to bring forth to thee
My riper love for recompense.”

And I :

“ Though I had given thee all things, yet must Love
Still count me as thy debtor whilst I live.
Live, and owe nothing ! What does Love not owe ?
Poor bankrupt Love, who would, but can not pay
For each day’s feast, nay, hath not wherewithal
To fee the servitors of his hourly wine,
So pawns his diadem, and at last himself,

And hugs the debtor's manacle, and so reigns,
A splendid spendthrift and a beggar king.
But he who loves not, owes not anything.
So saith he to his thoughts, which slowly turn
Deathward, and straight he dies within himself,
Disfranchised from the commonwealth of worlds.
And such, sweet Rupert, is the crowning truth
Which thou and this rememberable night
Have brought me. Now I know that even when Love
Has lavished all things from his treasury,
Yet hath he ever something to bestow.
Forgiveness is Love's gift when naught remains
For even Love to give. Yea, I have known
Full many who, like Gods, shower on the world
Their largess, yet, if thou shalt search their hearts,
Forgiveness is that last long-hoarded coin
Which they withhold, though giving all besides.
Till we have reached far down and brought up this
Out of that secret coffer kept for self,
We love not as He loves who leads the stars.

Nay, but I know not if the God unseen
Makes not this thing a part of those fine bonds
Whereby He binds us closer to Himself.
Loving not only for the gifts He gives,
But for the sins He pardons. O dear heart,
'Fore God I speak the truth ; I love thee more
For that which I forgive, than if such things
Had never been. I owe thee more, dear Rupert,
Than this my pardon or absolving word
Can e'er repay. Through thee, in part through thee,
My love has been made perfect."

Hearing this,
With either hand in Una's and in mine,
He raised his eyes toward heaven, and answering said:
" Love, thou hast conquered. At thy feet I lie.
Now lift me from the dust into thy throne
Of pure unpassing peace. I left thy light,
I broke thy covenant and forsook thy ways,
I sinned, I strayed from thee, I turned aside

From following thy broad footprints, I pursued
But Knowledge and high Action and the paths
That lead to Power supreme. My life is passed, —
A broken plan, a failure, a defeat.
But by thy might, O Love, I rise again,
Reconquering what I lost, — a realm within,
And this dear hand and presence, and a heart
That never left thy light. Two parted streams,
Re-mingling, now we move toward thy deep sea.
The memory of thy power which followed me,
The hope that, if I kept this charming spell
To life's last day, I might at last be saved,
The spell fast-bound upon this sinning hand,
Were thine, and now have brought me back to thee."

Thus as I sat beside him, soul with soul,
Mingling in love and silence, I did feel
As I have felt full oft at eventide
When summer wanes, and autumn, as a king,
Waits on the dreaming threshold of the woods

To robe himself in pomp of saddest gold,
And those two lights, disparted for a day,
Meet for one short calm hour and mix their beams ;
Till the sun saith, 'Thy softer might prevails,'
And solar strength dies out in lunar love,
With Love's one star to bless them.

So he passed

Out of these shadows to the perfect light ;
And when he passed, we could not think it death,
So gentle and so lovely was his sleep.

Long o'er the father's face the daughter wept,
Close-couching to his side, and whispering him
Such secret love-words as a maiden's breath
Sighs in her lover's ear when none is nigh.
And then she came to me, and held and kissed
My hands, and laid her head upon my knees,
And spake her sorrow. "Thou art all I have,"
She said. "Oh, nearer now than flesh and blood,

And henceforth as my father!" Soon we rose;
And, with her arm enwound with mine, we passed
Slow through the sleeping streets, until we reached
The mansion of the sisters of Saint Claire,
Whose door fell back on ready noiseless hinge,
Turning the outer darkness into light.
And in that light my new child found a home.

But look, my Basil, how yon window's width,
Which waits for the first kiss of coming day,
Shows its faint outline clear, and yet more clear,
As the black marble of the solid dark
Breaks in evanishing veins of white and grey.
A stillness comes; the world in worship kneels,
And on its breathless prayer all-breathless falls
The daybreak's benediction. Let me taste
This sacrament of silence, brief, but sweet,
And listen what my last dawn sings to me.

DAWN-SONG.

DAWN-SONG.



HARK, through the dark, far away,
Clarion-voiced as a watchman's warning,
Calls the loud bird of day
On Mother Night for the birth of Morning ;
And the East, that deathlike lay,
Shakes his raven locks into grey,
Ere they bloom into golden flowers inurning
The sun's risen ray.

And the daybreak's fountain is stirred
In streaks that curdle to silver whiteness,
And the morn's creating word
Warms the heart of the dark to dreams of lightness.
From the hill-crests bleak and bared
Ebbs the night like a hope deferred,
And my formless form through its darkling brightness
Comes felt but unheard.

Pure as the wreathen dews
Upshowered through the air with might and motion,
When a gold-plumed eagle unmews
His sea-sprayed wings o'er the dawn-red ocean, —
I soar, and my wan cheek woos
The roses that morning strews,
Till my face, as a nun's in her rapt devotion,
Glow warm with life's hues.

Through hollows, o'er heights afar,
The ghosts of grey fears in their flight are taken.
Star fades out fast upon star,
Like leaves from the forest of heaven down-shaken,
And the Day-God leads with his car
All shapes that beautiful are,
As he heaves to the hymn, which his harpstrings waken,
His hall's cloudy bar.

Over roses in Eden blown,
The amber spoke of the smooth wheel flashes,
Upbearing his chariot-throne,
And the day's red wine on my feet he dashes
From his cup bright with beryl stone,
Till I burn from sandal to zone,

And from under my feet, as sparks from their ashes,
My dawnlight is strown.

Oh, think how in life's young dawn
Such lights were the robes that I came arrayed in,
When close in Love's bower withdrawn
Thy heart wooed the rosebud heart of a maiden,
Till thy looks turned pale and wan
Toward my light, where it faintly shone,
And she sighed to thee sad in her soul love-laden :
" Why wilt thou be gone ?

" Is it day ? Or the slow up-rise
Of the Moon that fans the white dawn above her ?
Or Night with her myriad eyes
To shine on the love-bound feet of the lover ?
Or a lonely meteor that flies
From its homeless immensities ?
Or the last low smile on the clouds that cover
The Sun where he lies ? "

Look forth, O man ! it is day.
Thy tears were the seed for the light thou reapest,

For just before morning's ray
The flood of the dark flows alway the deepest.

Arise! Oh, wherefore delay?

Why cleaveth thy soul to the clay?

Awake, arouse thee, O thou that sleepest!—

Arise, come away.

Where now is that bower whose leaves
Once thrilled with the song of thy love-bird singing?

Why dwell in a nest that unweaves
All hues of thy faith and fancy's bringing?

No shelter, no song it now gives

But the crash as of dry dead leaves,
While beneath bare boughs, with their dark sighs ringing,
Thy soul droops and grieves.

Why stay where the nightly fear
Still whispers thee close with its awful, Whither?

Why tarry while year after year
Unclothes thy house for the winter's weather?

While each star seems a falling tear

For a star just laid on its bier,
And the earth grows old, and the skies they wither, —
Why tarriest thou here?

And thy world becomes less thine own,
And thou, as a traveller lost, belated,
 Hearest naught but the night-wind's moan,
Where once at thine ear every love-sound waited ;
 And thy voice learneth grief's own tone,
 And thou gropest with tears and groan
Through the gathering dark for the light uncreated, —
 Alone, all alone.

Here the truths which men sought to prove
Drop sweet to the lips in their full revealing
 From the boughs of Life's Tree, which move
Through shadow of dreams into whispers of healing,
 And the Beauty toward which they strove
 Fills my world and the shapes thereof,
And the stars are its thoughts, and the moon is its feeling,
 And the heaven is its love.

And here is thy life's lost prize
In the bowers whose emerald shades enshrine her ;
 And oft as for thee she sighs,
Her lute's low plaint sinks faint in its minor,
 And the April flows from those eyes
 Which are doors into Paradise,

Where, behind my dawn, like a dawn diviner,
Thy dear Lady lies.

Yea, behind this daybreak move
The flowering dawn of a rich to-morrow
And hours thou dreamest not of,
Whose feet, set free from their wintering furrow,
Shall lead, with light from above,
To thy soul, as its brooding dove,
Thy Lady of Comfort, thy Lady of Sorrow,
Thy Lady of Love.

Come hither; why wouldst thou stay,
These shores of the rose and the myrtle scorning?
Come hither; wherefore delay
To take Life's crown for thy soul's adorning?
Oh, hear what my dawn-voices say!
Oh, hear us, the children of Day,
Whose feet are the light, and whose eyes are the morning!
Come away, come away!

FOURTH WATCH.

IV.

DAWN, in whose smile the daystar only is left
Of all the fading star-flowers of Night's crown,
Grey borderer on the bounds of Truth and Dream, —
Dreams pure as truths, and truths as fair as dreams, —
How oft have I from this high convent tower
Watched thee advance as though thou wert God's self,
No divine Being as men oft misname Him,
But the perpetual divine Becoming, —
Opening, like Life's illimitable flower,
Light into larger light along these skies,
Whilst from these skies, that loomed like misted hills,
Morn broke in voiceless cataracts of white light
Earthward, and slow the new-made earth came forth

Fresh from the lifted signet-ring of Night.
Now Love's one star with self-surrendering love
Fades as an unfed lamp and dies in day.
Dear is the morning light of youth, and dear
The scarce articulate speech of coming spring,
And dear the firstborn glances that reveal
A maiden's long-sought sweetness. Dear as these,
As youth and spring and love, was thy first light
That broke around me on that Christmas morn,
When, once more seated by this fading fire,
I found myself enfolded in such thoughts
As Memory gives to Love to keep Love warm.
The night had passed, and something said within :
'The morning, lo, the morning is at hand.'
I could not pray. Why should we ask for aught
When everything in heaven and earth is ours ?
Had I not seen her face and felt her love, —
Her face and love, so like, so near to hers
Who was my star in Paradise? Now, Lord,
Speak but the word, and bid me pass in peace.

And then, but not till then, I understood
Why my unanswered prayer so long had knocked
At every gate of God's death-chartered city,
Praying that He would summon from among
Those golden-tressèd Dreams that wait on Sleep
Some clear-eyed Vision, child of Night or Day,
To lead me till I came beneath the trees
Where my lost Lady sits beside the well
In whose pure deeps the pure may look on God.
Why in such dreams and trances had mine eyes
Not seen my heart's desire? Why had my soul
Thus vainly ventured heavenward? / Love is sight;
'T is only Love that sees. But perfect Love
Is perfect vision, seeing into God. *f*

Thus as I sat before this dying hearth
I thought how many a night with rush of wing
My spirit had risen at the mighty sound
Of some great sentence read, and I had soared,
Circling from height to far ethereal height,

Toward highest heaven, blindly beating up
Into its terrible brightness, seeing naught,
But hearing only voices in deep talk,
Like trumpets in the thunder. There I failed ;
For strength to soar gives not the power to see.
And then I thought of that my hideous dream,
To which my own heart had unbarred the gates.
And so I journeyed back by paths of thought
To that deep source of all our sin and woe, —
Love's incompleteness. Then I knelt and prayed
That Love would lead me into larger light ;
And even if he should lead me to no light,
But into deeper dark, that I might go,
Knowing that long ere light or dark were born,
Love was, and though these perished, still should be.

While thus I prayed, there passed upon my soul
What seemed no common sleep, nor ev'n the trance
Wherein the spirit sees, but looses not
Its mortal moorings to its mould of dust.

It was no vision, 't was a passing forth
Of mine own self beyond these bars of flesh
To where my spirit soon shall make its home.
For in all dreams whereof I ever told thee,
Love not being perfect, part of self remained,
And barred the pathway to what lay beyond.
But in this last the whole of self went forth.
Oh, never may I tell thee all I felt,
Nor what in those brief moments I became !

I died ; and in my dying I beheld
Beside me a fair shadow of myself
That seemed to wait for me. I saw no more.
Then headlong through the unfathomable abyss
I sank, and seemed to sink for evermore,
Until I faded back, dissolved and lost
In the outer darkness where life's nothings lie.
Then in a moment rising from the smoke
And drift of all that once had borne my name,
I found me on the brink of a pure flood,

Whose breathless mirror yielded to my gaze
Myself now clothed upon with form and face
Of that same shadow I had seen in death, —
Another self, the same, yet not the same,
But larger, lovelier, loftier than before.
Again I stood upon that ledge of rock,
Now raised to more ethereal altitude,
And the same valley lengthened out through leagues
Of light before me as I looked abroad.
I saw no altar, heard no ruining stream
Roar down betwixt the cliff-sides bleached and
 bare ;
But as a ship's keel sheers to right and left
The steep smooth surge, so now each wall of rock
Fell back in billowy greenness, and between,
A river of crystal clearness flowed and wound
And widened upward to a lake that lay,
Bound with a circlet of white strand, and strewn
With blossoming island-bowers. Above them rose
A mighty Mount, from whose far-folded heights

A dawn behind a slow-increasing dawn
Seemed always coming, and from out its peaks,
The home of holiest Gods, strange voices came,
And murmured mystic words oracular,
And thunderings and soft lightnings. On its brow
And shoulders of imperial amethyst
Lay seven great moonlike stars; and now they slept,
Dropping their dreams on men, or now, awake,
Loosed some new thought in sevenfold music, heard
Round all that hillside crossed with silver threads
Of streams unnumbered. Every thread of sound,
A sweetly-separate chord, told its own joy
To its own dell and overhanging bower,
Or hurried down to join with choral shout
The multitudinous anthem heard from far.

But neither by the brink of that clear flood,
Nor in those island-bowers, nor on that Mount,
Saw I the visioned face which long I sought
Sorrowing; nor yet in stream or tuneful star

Heard I that voice which, had I lain long dead,
Yet hearing I had lived. Oh, what to me,
Oh, Basil, what to any soul that lives,
Are streams or stars or voices of the world,
Or dawns of light on light, or tongues of Gods,
Or gifts of sevenfold strength, or perfect Power,
Without the presence of the face we love ?
Even so felt I in that high-visioned hour :
Without her, morn and noon with all their gold
Were black as nether night.

Again I looked

To left of that great Hill, and there I saw
A land warm-drenched with sunlight as with wine,
A land of valleys that withdrew to hear
Their own idyllic chant of brook and bower ;
Mounts of transfiguration, up whose slopes
The voice of shepherdess and shepherd's reed
Breathed slow the brooding heart in deep content ;
Elysian meadows flowered with asphodel

And greened with the moist griefs that overflowed
April's half-open eyes ; and woodland walks
Warm with the feet of pastoral fantasies.

But none of these could hold me. Soul and sense
Still hungering passed them sorrowfully by,
As to the right I turned where the great Hill
Sank inward, cape on cape, with lessening shores
Toward a great sea. On its horizon lay
A night of wintry clouds and cold blue wreaths,
Now pierced with arrowy splendors of the morn.
And through the nearer spaces of the sea
What looked like barks of Ophir went and came,
Each steered by a calm Dream whom men call Death.
Some went, light-laden with a slumbering freight
Of spirits, pale, unchapleted, unclothed,
And seemed as those who had no country ; these
Sailed out of sight through doors of morn, and went
Where they must wander for a little space,
Wearing their robe of dust and mask of tears.

And other barks there were, which, passing these,
Grew out of distance, growing like a light
On the sea's verge, where one by one they rose,
Each a fair-voyaged argo, on whose deck,
Bright-vestured in the light of their new day,
Were homeless, home-returning pilgrim souls,
Re-orient spirits like fair-stationed Gods,
That from the dawn's bright gateway sailed and sang,
Sending before them tidings of their freight
Of life-balms and love-dedicated spiee,
Which they had sought and brought through perilous
seas
From sorrow-laden forelands, drear with loss,
Black reefs of pain and dolorous shores of death.

All these, and more I saw ; but what I sought
With tears, I found not, saw not anywhere.
Then all the beauty faded, all the light
Grew dark about me, and my spirit waxed
Heavy with hopeless sorrow. And as a sheep

Reft of her yeanling comes upon a place
Wherefrom she thought full sure her lost lamb called,
And coming finds it empty ; so I stood
And gazed and grieved with grief wellnigh to death,
Till toward that death which I so late had passed,
My thoughts went darkening backward.

Grieving thus,

I turned to look my last, when straight in front,
In the green bosom of the Hill, I spied
A temple pure as the inmost light of heaven,
That shone with pillared front and sculptures fair,
Like a white-blossoming star of coming eve.
Beneath, in loftily-shaded lawns there walked
All who had loved the highest, all who had loved
Much, and for Love's sake suffered much, and all
Who had scorned themselves that they might serve
 dear Love,
And go where Love should lead them, — Seers divine
And Sages who had taught us, Poets crowned

With slow calm looks and high thoughts that flowed
forth

In full-mouthed music as they spake and moved
Majestic. O'er them watched a citadel
White with its temple, named the Beautiful,
Bloodless in ritual and in memory,
Save that within its innermost sanctuary
The names of all who had died for Love's pure sake,
And chiefly Christ's, our sweet and blessed King,
Were kept in Love's rich book and blazoned there,
With act and word and thought, in characters
Of light, amid art's heavenliest imageries.
There to the temple, with sweet-fingered lutes,
Rapt eyes, and hymning voices, moved a band
Of women ever beautiful and young,
Bearing in chalices of fine wrought gold
Spice and sweet wine and amaranthine flowers.
A steam of precious gums, sighing to heaven
Immeasurable sweetness, trembled slow
From off an altar, fed with holy breath

Of low-sung litanies and answering sound
Of flutes and harps that passioned back their prayer.
And leading these with prayer-uplifted hands,
White-stoled and brow-bound with the bud and
 blush

Of love-warm roses, there I saw her stand,
The apple of Love's eye, the taintless core
Of Love's own heart, — my Lady, lost Roselle.

She, when the prayer was ended, with a voice
Which her hand followed, and deep-languaged
 look,

Sang ; and her sisters ever and anon
Took the song's burden from her as it fell,
Sending soft answers back from lip and string,
Deep intonations, sweetness mixed with awe,
Like the slow roll of thunder in mountains heard
Through sultry summer-noons. And thus to me,
Fair as the light that leads the rising day,
And turning toward me, sang my morning star.

Here where the violet's eye grows pale for love
Of the young tree that shrouds her, where the tree
Yearns all noon for the star half-seen above, —
We wait for thee.

Where dreams and visitations wait for flight,
Where baby soul-buds drop down goldenly,
To sail Time's wastes and break through birth to light,
We wait for thee.

Here suns and moons and great stars, rounding slow,
Lead us from thought to thought, from sea to sea.
From life to life man's generations flow :
We wait for thee.

As ocean-drops, updrawn through infinite air,
Fall on far hillsides, jewels bright to see,
So rise thy tears, a crown for thee to wear.
We wait for thee.

Sayest thou, Earth's life alone is incomplete?
Or sayest, None sorrow through the world but we ?
Here too are voids, and here the vacant seat.
We wait for thee.

Now thou descendest toward the water's edge,
Now thy lamp fails, and round thee drearily
The surf-mists burn from rock and roaring ledge.

We wait for thee.

Why tarriest thou ? Why linger the slow wheels
Of thy soul's chariot ? Wouldst thou not be free
To taste Love's lips and loose their crimson seals ?

We wait for thee.

“I wait for thee.” Oh, were not those my words
To her, my Lady, when I waited once
And watched for every crescent moon that filled
Her cup with silver wine of monthly light ?
“I wait for thee.” Oh, there are words, good Basil,
Words we have spoken on earth, which grow to be
Songs that shall greet us at the gates of heaven.
Then sight and hearing failed ; I knew no more.
A bright cloud rose, the music sank, and I
Died back into this body I had left
Here seated senseless by this sinking fire.
Far other notes now wooed my waking ear

Than those first sword-like sounds that clave my soul
Asunder when I started from that dream
Of darkness, drowned in mists and moans of hell.
Hard by yon casement as I stood and looked
Downward upon the dawning streets beneath,
Uprose the matin melodies and the chant
Of singing men and maidens, winding slow,
A rising river of music, sweet and deep,
Till Silence as she lingered on the air
Forgat that she was silence, and caught up
The ascending psalm which told that Christ was
born.

The air was full of angels. Bastioned gate,
Turret and rampire, belfry and steep roof,
Smoked with the golden vapors mystical
Outstreaming from bright shapes that waited there.
And all the valley-hollows and the hills
Above the valleys quickened into light,
Full-filled with shadowy forms and such sweet sounds
As never I had heard the like before.

And thou rememberest, Basil, how when lauds
Were ended, and I entered this same room,
Thou didst come hither privily, and didst say
That some among our brethren fain would know
Through thee if God had shown me anything,
By voice or vision, on that Christmas morn.
“For surely,” said they all, “our abbot’s face
Betokeneth something. Hath he seen at dawn
A vision of God’s angels? If so be,
He verily wrongs us if he give us not
Some little taste of that which the dear Lord
Has brought in such full measure to his lips.”
And then I answered thee, that when the hour
Was fully come, I would impart to thee,
And through thee to my brethren, whatsoe’er
Might ground them deeper in the peace of God,
Or build them higher in love. For well thou knowest
That these our high-built walls o’erflow not ever
With froth and vapor of vociferous talk,
The shallow, babbling streams of shallow minds, —

Not when in playful converse we may pace
These sunny cloisters at the close of day
And take our sport, nor when the reader leaves
The lectern and descends unto his place
And beechwood platter at our midday meal,
Nor when we ease with interlude of smiles
Our eyelids journeying through the parchment page
At morning-tide. Not that our brethren go
From hour to hour with beastlike muzzled mouths,
As those who dare not speak lest they should err
In speaking. Neither sharpen we our tongues
On the cold whetstone of smooth circling phrase
To point a ready foil for personal thrusts.
Our talk has always been of thoughts and things,
Not oft of others, never of ourselves.

All through that Christmas morning here I sat
And heard the festival sounds from street and lane
Beneath me, and low answers from this hill
Which drew about its forehead, hour by hour,

Some garland of new song, and fed my heart
With silent music, as I sat with you,
Whose names I scarce could whisper to myself, —
Rupert, Roselle and Una, — musing oft
On the last boon and benison sent from God
Through the dark morning of the day of Christ.
And as whene'er we see some gift of love,
The giver and the gift seem always one,
So through the day did all things grow more dear,
And all things now seemed love-gifts from a God.
In the far sweep of backward-looking faith
I thought I saw, on the fair slopes of heaven,
Love dying down to one small seed of fire,
Self-buried in its furrow, where it slept ;
And then an even-blowing wind of life
Outfanned it from the furrow, and it fell
Deep in a maiden's bosom while she prayed.
And there it slumbered, fed with silver peace,
Till from the cloisters of her virgin frame
One came, and that was Christ, — the travelling tent

For pilgrim Love, who more than once had come
To earth in such disguise, and still would come,
And die, and hide himself, and come again.

And then I thought that He whom we name God
Was not perhaps some unit of cold thought,
A primal number, lone, creationless,
Such as Greek sages gave to Christian saints.
For now He came to me, as oft before,
The everlasting Twofold, ever one,
The Man and Woman still inseparable.
And as the absolute can never live
Without its relative; as silent space
Knows nothing, never sees or hears itself
Without time's measuring music; as cold form
Lies blind and blank till color comes with kiss
And warmth outpoured upon it, such as once
Elisha poured upon the lifeless child, —
So God was now no longer unto me
A lonely masculine might above the worlds,

But as the Man and Woman, twofold life,
Its married Law and Love, and these were one.
And from their wedded love sprang forth a child,
Their first-begotten son, whose name was Love, —
Love their great heir, the lord of life and death,
The holder of the keys to all we know
And all the secrets of the unsearchable,
The chalice-bearer of the worlds' life-wine,
Bringer of light and steersman of the stars.

On many a love-hewn highway like to this,
Half faith, half fancy, such as poets choose,
I went that Christmas morn, and since have gone.
But say not, Basil, that I told thee such ;
For every thought is not for every ear,
And in a world where weakness needs must be,
It is the unwise, but not the worst of men,
Who do the worst ; till one would almost say,
Old father Satan and his scapegoat sons
Work far less mischief than the weak of wit.

Basil, my end draws near. Thou sure wilt say,
'Brother, why bendest thou thy passionate gaze
Again and yet again thus yearningly
Toward the fast-fading forms of yesterday ?'
'T is sweet. And this, besides, is Nature's law.
As man fares nearer to the day of death,
And feels the neighboring splendors of death's light
That blanch his brows and blind his eyes, she sends
Her angel, Memory, to turn him round
And lure his hopeless looks from years to come,
And wills that he look backward, lest that light
Should blind him wholly. So with backward looks
And walking backwards, man goes forth from life.

And looking back on this brief tract of years,
This tale told in the night, I now perceive
What scarce-discernible consistencies
And little concords mix in one man's life,
To mould it into unity with itself
And bind its first beginning to its end.

O fair blue shield, bedight with crescent moon
And crumbling stars and planet of the morn,
Which I uplifted to my comrades' cheer
In Romalin's tiltyard on that day in June !
Thy narrow field of blue comes back this night
In yon broad buckler of unbounded sky,
Which thrice has stooped to greet us with its
 love,
Thrice lighted and thrice lifted into songs
Which we have heard in silence. O fair Night,
Now folding up thy star-book, scripted thick
With silver signs and parables unsealed
Of truth which, opening, shall redeem the world !
Thy triple changing lights bring back to me
The three chief mile-marks of my life ; thy songs
Have led my thoughts from love to loftier love.
And he, Love's pilgrim, who came first in black
Through these bright embers, lays aside that black,
The north-wind's dress of darkness, — he who came
In grey, and then in white, now comes at last

In Love's completeness, clad in cloth of gold.
The volume, which I sought but could not find,
Searching the woodlands all that summer noon,
Is now come back to me in worth and weight
Richer than heretofore ; and what of worth
Love there has written, I have shown it thee,
Unclasping and unfolding to thy sight
All deeds, all words, all thoughts, not such as I,
But such as Love himself has traced therein.
For be it known, my brother, that man's heart
Is the great Book of Love, — the Book of Life,
The scroll of doom, where each one finds at last
His sentence, and the immutable decree
Of life or death, his heaven, or else his hell.

Brother, I die. Even while I speak I hear
Along Life's corridors the coming feet, —
I feel Death's groping fingers, I await
His rending of the veil of this weak flesh,
Which, cleft in twain, lets-in the light whereby

I pass within the holiest place and meet
My crowned love face to face.

Look, Basil, look

On this low hearth-fire, dying as I die ;
See its last tongue of flame, that slowly spires
Upward, and seems a monumental light
Unquenchable, lifting its ensign high
Above the grey dust of each buried spark.
Oh, tarry a moment till I take from thee
A prophesying symbol of the day,
Whose dawn already whitens through yon East !
The Hour is coming — hear ye not her feet
Falling in sweet sphere-thunder down the stairs
Of Love's pure sky ? — when this our holy Church
Shalt melt away in ever-widening walls,
And be for all mankind, and in its place
A mightier church shall come, whose covenant word
Shall be the deeds of love. Not *Credo* then, —
Amo shall be the password through its gates.

Man shall not ask his brother any more,
“Believest thou?” but “Lovest thou?” and all
Shall answer at God’s altar, “Lord, I love.”
For Hope may anchor, Faith may steer, but Love,
Great Love alone, is captain of the soul.

But I grow cold. Come nearer, brother Basil;
Come, fold me in thine arms, and hold me close,
And let me take one last look in thine eyes
And hear thee say ‘Farewell’ before I go.
The flagging spirit of this last weak flame
Drops lower, and dies along the hearth. And see,
How Day draws forth his ploughshare on the Night,
Furrowing the dark, till the dun fields of death
Grow red with broad-sown lights that spring and burst
In buds of fire, and Morning’s passion-flowers
Unfold through the bright gardens of the Dawn.
They bow, they tremble to the waking wind,
Which heaves on high the streaming vapor-drifts,
And great God comes, the Lord of lights. Afar

On azure floor-work flash his feet of gold.
A low wind breathes, and with the rising wind
What voices call me! Hear'st thou not their song?
"We wait for thee, we wait for thee." Again
I hear them, and my cold veins creep and flow
Like frozen currents touched with Life's new spring,
Or new-born streams that tremble for the sea.
And hark! above those voices, like a light
Above the light, I hear her voice, — 't is she, —
"Aurelius, ho, Aurelius!" and once more,
"Aurelius, ho, Aurelius, come away!"
Quick, brother Basil, hold me! Haste! I fall.
Death — God — Roselle! I come, I come, I come!

REFERENDA.

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P. 39. *Who knows not how the Suabian bugle blew.*

Cf. DANTE, *Paradiso*, iii. 118.

“ Quest' è la luce della gran Gostanza,
Che del secondo vento di Soave
Generò il terzo, e l' ultima possanza.”

P. 79. *As yet he loved not.*

Cf. S. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, book iii. c. 1.

“ Nondum amabam, et amare amabam. . . . Quærebam quod amarem, amans amare. . . . Amare et amari mihi dulce erat.”

P. 120. *The Lady of Comfort.*

Cf. *Gesta Romanorum*, Tale lxiii. (Swan's tr.).

“ The Emperor Vespasian had a daughter called Aglæes, whose loveliness was greater than that of all other women. It happened that as she stood opposite to him on a certain occasion, he considered her very attentively, and then addressed her as follows : ‘ My beloved daughter, thy beauty merits a loftier title than thou hast yet received. I will change thy name ; henceforward, be thou called THE LADY OF COMFORT, in sign that whosoever looks upon thee in sorrow may depart in joy.’ . . . But a certain knight, who dwelt in some remote country, came to the gate of the palace, and when she was called, the knight accosted her in these words : ‘ Fair damsel, thou hast been called the *Lady of Comfort*, because every one who enters thy presence sorrowful returns contented and happy.’ ”

P. 134. *Roselle.*

Cf. CHAUCER, *The Court of Love.*

“For all here bewtie stode in Rosiall,
She seemed lich a thying celestiall.”

“And softly thanne her coloure gan appeire,
As rose so rede, throughoute her visage alle,
Wherefore me thynke it is according here,
That she of right be cleped Rosyall.”

“And eke my lady Rosyall the shene,
Which hath in comforte set myne harte, I wene.”

P. 159. *Already France
Has raised the Cross against them.*

Cf. GUIZOT, *History of France*, chap. xviii. “The Kingship in France.” MICHELET, *History of France*, chap. vii.

P. 240. *Oh, how shall I rejoice, laugh, sing, and dance.*

Cf. TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis*, c. xxx.

“Quale autem spectaculum in proximo est adventus Domini! . . . Quæ tunc spectaculi latitudo! Quid admirer? quid rideam? Ubi gaudeam, ubi exsultem, spectans tot ac tantos reges . . . item præsides, persecutores dominici nominis, sævioribus quam ipsi contra christianos sævierunt, flammis insultantibus liquescentes?”

P. 279. *“Is it day?”*

Cf. *The Shakespeare Society's Papers*, vol. i. pp. 13, 14; Gervinus, *Shakespeare Commentaries* (Bunnett's tr.), vol. i. pp. 288-9.

P. 285. *But the perpetual divine Becoming.*

Cf. GOETHE, *Faust*, Prolog: “Das Werdende,” etc.

